

AFRICAN WOMEN IN MEDIA CONFERENCE 2022 #AWiM22

# UNITED IN ACTION

Fes, Morocco.

CONFERENCE REPORT

8- 9 DECEMBER 2022



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Women in News



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The banner features a blue background with a stage-like setting. At the top, there are silhouettes of spotlights and a stage curtain. The text 'AWiM' is written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font, with the 'i' being lowercase. Below it, 'CONFERENCE 2022' is written in a smaller, bold, white sans-serif font. At the bottom of the banner, there is a row of silhouettes of diverse people, representing an audience.

# AWiM

## CONFERENCE 2022

### **UNITED IN ACTION: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

African Women in Media's (AWiM) sixth conference (#AWiM2022), was a hybrid event that brought together academia, industry experts, civil society and policy actors. The objective was to share insights and best practices on the intersection of gender equality and media development in Africa. The conference, which took place on 8-9 December 2022 in Fez, Morocco, featured over 90 speakers, 16 panels and three workshops all engaging in various topics.

Themed "United in Action," discussions were wide-ranging across three sub-themes: Gender Equality in and through Media; Collective Action and Representation; and Media Business and Global Challenges. 'United in Action' refers to the coming together of all stakeholders in gender equality, in our shared experiences, and unity among media practitioners, academics, policy actors and civil society towards gender equality in the newsroom and in media content. Therefore, the AWiM2022 conference was guided by an ethos of shared best practices and collaborative action to impact positively the way media functions in relation to African women. What follows, then, is a collation of thematic recommendations from the discussions, distilled into their most actionable form that each of us, as the collective media fraternity can apply in and within our structures and praxis.

As we list these recommendations, you will discover intersecting threads in each thematic area mentioned above. The issue of climate change, for instance, cannot be discussed without the nuances and understanding of land, owned predominantly by men, and its contributions to gender inequality. Each theme demands different levels of collective action as their primary actors are also different. The business of media similarly has a direct consequence on the financial empowerment of women in media and tackles how that might account for a reduction in gender inequality in the media. These discussions are grounded by the development, implementation, adoption and evaluation of policies that codify actions and keep the decision makers and individuals accountable.

In a powerful opening and keynote session, there was an accounting of progress made towards gender equity in the media in Africa. It was clear that gaps still exist in leadership and representation of women. Visual culture is still mostly objectifying and perpetuating negative stereotypes about women's role in society. The call was to expand the role of media to not only report the news, but to challenge the reproduction and redistribution of such stereotypes. Aided by supportive legal and policy frameworks, the task ahead was not to simply implement, but also to adopt.

Rarely can the challenges experienced in media organizations be overcome without policies, and the media has undoubtedly done well towards the development, implementation and adoption of organizational policies, particularly gender policies. The gaps that persist for women in media - to name a few, women's underrepresentation in high editorial positions, sexual harassment in the workplace and lack of structures for redress, imbalanced recruitment practices, unfair compensation, lack of career progression - may be filled by attaining a good balance of internal and external mechanisms for change. The panel on Policies and Regulations towards gender equality in the media, resoundingly called for an increase in the number of women sitting as board directors in media companies. Participants called for the changing practices in news making and messaging that will limit gender stereotyping and curb editorial impunity. Continuous training on how employees understand sexual harassment and, even more importantly, structures that resolve these issues within media organizations and finally, building overall inclusive systems in the workplace that meet the threshold of gender balance.

Another critical question that the AWiM22 conference aimed to answer was how the media is responding to the global challenges of our time: climate change, peace & security and food security. These discussions were by no means exhaustive but included, academic, civic, organizational and even personal perspectives spread out across panels that focused on; Media Entrepreneurship, Women in Politics, the Promises and Perils of Digital Technologies and Online & Offline Safety and Harassment of Women.

The ensuing presentations, questions and discussions revealed that women's lived experiences amid increasing global challenges were dire. Each one highlighted how women bear the brunt of climate change, conflict and gender-based violence. Further, they each revealed that the media had a significant role in contextualizing narratives in the Global South by telling gendered perspectives of climate change, amplifying women's roles and voices in regional peace, and extensively covering gender-based violence to bring to light the pervasiveness of these issues. To move to action, the panel agreed that media organizations should not only join the fight for climate justice but should mainstream gender-responsive policies that protect women as subjects and objects of the news.

Gender inequality, as has been extensively reported, is aided by many social factors, including a wide gap in income between men and women. The conference discussions would, therefore, not be complete without deconstructing and understanding the global challenge of media business entrepreneurship, including media financing. Practical actions that can meet this challenge, as offered by the panelists, include constant innovation within media organizations to meet the demands of a fast-paced, and constantly evolving digital landscape., Collective action through partnerships that can potentially increase revenue within media organizations, structures and frameworks that protect women from sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination and violence in the workplace were also called for.; similarly, continuous training of journalists to reskill and upskill their reporting and finally, policies that ensure women can take up leadership positions within the organizations.

One cannot speak about women in leadership without perspectives from the political landscape, which is usually male-dominated across the African continent and a good indicator in the development matrix. The panel on women in politics focused on how the media reports women throughout an election cycle. It drew from experiences of recent election coverage in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. Still, it found that these perspectives were ubiquitous in Africa. How can the media ensure balanced, fair and equal coverage of women candidates? The speakers proposed the following key actions: enforcing in-country policies and protocols that demand equitability, e.g., the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, selection of sources and stories that are gender balanced and representative, media training on gender sensitivities, mentorship for women interested in political careers, the institutionalization of gender policies within political parties, countering cultural practices that are aimed at upholding patriarchy and finally, partnership with civil society organizations to teach women about their rights.



The panel on the promise and perils of digital technologies for women-led political activism went a step further to outline how digital technologies could be used to overcome barriers that women in political spaces faced. Although digital spaces are still dominated by men, and other challenges still exist, actions to democratize digital platforms would undoubtedly lead to strengthened female political participation, and an amplification of women's voices. Similar sentiments were drawn from the panel on understanding digital media with the addition of inclusivity for people with disabilities on digital platforms. These include accommodations such as, interpreters, assistive devices, data protection and inclusive policies.

The issue of mental health and psychological wellbeing is increasing in discourse around the information age. Therefore, it was crucial during the conference to hear the media's perspectives as communicators of information and as workers on the frontline. The panels on Representations and Communications of Mental Health in the Media and Harnessing media for health advocacy, promotion and behavior change communication spotlighted that communication around mental health and mental illness is still marred with stigma and negative stereotypes. Further, journalists themselves have no avenues to seek support for psychological first aid. It was encouraging that the speakers, in their different fields, were pursuing ways to resolve this through their research works. They rounded up this conversation by putting both media organizations and other agencies to task to act by; dispelling negative imagery of mental illness in visual culture, use their platforms to educate and inform, sensitization of leadership in and out of the organization to acknowledge mental health as a priority, regulations on social media and gender representative content.

The AWiM22 discussions culminated in a renewed commitment to collective action towards ending gender inequality in the media and society. As women in media and our allies, we realized that we have shared challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities. We learned from the Gender, Culture and Violence in Morocco, Women and Media Prejudice and Misogyny in Moroccan society panels that cultural practices can constrain progress and limit creativity. The resolutions were not different from those that had been echoed throughout the conference. These include balanced and representative content in visual culture that challenge stereotypes about women and change public perception, policies and structural solutions that protect women from any type of violence and reduce barriers to entry for women into typically male-dominated spaces.

This is by no means an exhaustive summary of the actionable actions that came through from panel discussions. The panels offered much more detail and analysis of the topics discussed. We invite you to dive deep into the report to engage and grapple with the ideas presented. The main goal of the AWiM22 conference was to create solutions that might guide media organizations, media practitioners, academics, civil society organizations and media partners and allies in their work towards equity in and out of the media. We know that these actionable actions can serve as great agents for change when adapted and applied accordingly.

African Women in Media

## 1. Plenary session and opening remarks

The keynote session established the direction and themes that the conference took. The theme for AWiM22 was “United in Action,” which was something that Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola, CEO and Co-founder of African Women in Media, stressed early in her opening speech. The aim of the whole event wasn't just to advance the discourse surrounding women in media; it was more about the actionable actions that can be taken to bridge the inequality gap in the media and lower the barriers to entry for women. The conference's objective was to find potential courses of action that women must take to assert their voices in the media beyond the limitations and expectations socially, professionally and culturally imposed on them.

### 1.1. Remarks by panelists

i) *Dr Yemisi Akinbobola- CEO and Co-founder, African Women in Media.*

Dr Yemisi Akinbobola pointed out that the limitations that African women in media face, was the driving force behind AWiM's mission and vision. She continued that the purpose of the event is to unite in action, emphasizing that the most important objective of holding the conference was to think about what would happen after the event was over. She asked the audience to reflect and develop answers to the question, “What can we do after we leave here?”

ii) *Latifa Akharbach- President, High Authority Audiovisual Communication, Morocco.*

The main point that the president of HACA (Moroccan High Authority Audiovisual Communication) made was that there's a lack of women protagonists in the African media sphere, meaning that only a few women occupy high positions in the media industry. Young women lack role models and leaders they can strive to emulate. Women always take secondary roles as mere witnesses, while the dominating male force animates the media giant as a patriarchal system that doesn't account for women's special needs. To her, the solution is to allow women to be protagonists, i.e., key decision-makers and policymakers.

iii) *Dr Amina Lemrini El Ouahabi- Présidente fondatrice, l'Association Démocratique des Femmes, Maroc.*

Dr Amina Lemrini, also HACA's former president, pointed out how media discriminates against African Women. The male-dominated media doesn't allow women to thrive. For example, women are still greatly objectified to capture the audience's attention and not viewed as self-actualizing individuals capable of intellectualism. Such sexist stereotypes hinder the serious presence of women in media as significant speakers, intellectuals and contributors to media discourse. Dr Lemrini pointed out that Africa is behind in equality between the sexes. She highlighted that the media does not contribute actionably in making change and emphasized that reporting about issues that women face isn't enough. The media should play a more important role as an awareness-raising apparatus that doesn't only report about stereotypes engraved in our culture but also obliterates those stereotypes as opposed to reproducing and redistributing them.

Dr Amina Lemrini called for African women to work in solidarity with one another to transcend beyond patriarchal limitations and become their own protagonists. Women should also fight for their own rights by pushing for a legal and policy framework that accounts for their special needs and expectations

The introductory remarks set the tone for the rest of the events and panels. The spirit that animated the conference from start to end was to find solutions in the form of actionable actions. Further, African women in the media sphere shouldn't suffice with being aware of the limitations that hinder them from reaching their full potential. The next step is to use the awareness of limitations to come up with actionable actions that break the shackles that don't allow women to be the cultural protagonists and thought leaders.

# **Mobility, Identity and Diaspora narratives:**

**How the media shapes narratives  
around labor & migration.**



## Abstract

In this panel, the speakers tried to analyse how the diaspora is portrayed in western countries via media by presenting examples. Diasporic identities in the panel are understood as ongoing processes of people or a community understanding themselves and, at the same time, being defined by others (western). Identities are thus constructed at the intersection of the continuously flowing boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them'. Symbolic space is negotiated at the boundaries, and identities are fiercely debated, constructed, and re-constructed. It is the transition of misrepresentation of media between the west and the eastern countries.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator- Dr Ming Kuok Lim- Advisor for Communication and Information, UNESCO Office for the Maghreb, Morocco.

- i) Dr Catherine Therrien- Professor, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco.
- ii) Dr Kenza Oumlil- Professor, Al Akhawayn University, Morocco.
- iii) Grace Chimela- Anthropologist, Documatism, Greece.
- iv) Theresa Fianko- Founder and managing editor, Diaspora Digital News, Ghana.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr Catherine's Therrien and Dr Kenza Oumlil- Representations of Sub-Saharan Women Migrants in Morocco: Mainstream Online News versus Ethnographic Descriptions.*

The presentation was collaborative between Dr Catherine Therrien and Dr Kenza Oumlil who both covered issues concerning women migrants in mainstream media. Dr Therrien's case study was on the use of media and the representation of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. The resource that was used to elicit this picture of the misrepresentation of Sub-Saharan migrants is Hespress which showed women's migration is severely affected. The issues women faced are family separation, difficulty to find jobs, lack of access to maternity care, and health problems. She concluded that human trafficking has been instrumentalized due to economic-sexual exchange. Dr Oumlil tackled the mainstream new media versus scholarship which suggested that giving voice by alternative voices can play a role in fulfilling the need for equality and eliminating discrimination.

- ii) *Grace Chimela- Second generation migrants, Social identities and Social control: The case of the "Afro-Greeks."*

Grace Chimela outlined her objective of the study by analyzing the black population in Greece and the issues they face in their daily life. In her methodology, she used interviews and questionnaires and compared them with the African immigrant population in Greece in the late 60s. The findings were different from what she observed in the 60s. This change was due to the demonstrations that were held in the last decades toward black people in Greece. For example, she presented George Floyd's murder as an incident that raised awareness of Greek citizens to raise the hashtag Black Lives Matter. The use of the term "Afro-Greek" was widely known in Greece to refer to Africans living in Greece, these people were facing all kinds of racism including assault identification, and manifesting. Grace finished her presentation by quoting "not having citizenship means not having political rights"

- iii) *Theresa Fianko- New Media platforms as the digital voice for the global diaspora*

Theresa Fianko tackled many issues under the title of "New media platforms as the digital voice for the global diaspora. She tried to give an image of how the media is depicting diaspora by addressing issues and statistics. This includes the challenges migrants/people in diasporas face generally and cultural differences, human rights abuses, stereotyping bias, and discrimination. But mainly focused on women specifically as a gender who face a lot of sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment either in or out of the home. This was in light of how new media bridges the gap during the covid-19 pandemic. She concluded her presentation by emphasizing the need to balance ethical rapportage. "We avoid headlines for the wrong reasons"



# **Policies and regulations towards gender equality in media:**

**where we are and where we need to be.**



## Abstract

This panel addressed a very important issue, which is the lack of implementation of policies in media organizations. While the policies are there to protect women, those policies aren't enough; they're only ink on paper when media organizations take them for granted. This panel also explored gender equity in the media and how current organizational policies are responding to the gender pay gap, discrimination and sexual harassment. The speakers offered measurable indicators to track the progress made in policy creation and implementation.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator- Dr Yemisi Akinbobola- CEO and Co-founder, African Women in Media.

- i) Dr Sarah Macharia- Gender Advisor, Fojo Media Institute, Linnaeus University.
- ii) David Omwoyo- CEO, Media Council of Kenya, Kenya.
- iii) Bethlehem Negash Woldeyohannes- Researcher, Ethiopian Media Women Association, Ethiopia.
- iv) Tumwesigire Hillary Peace- Chairperson, Women Media Owners for Change, Rwanda.
- v) Joy Kaguri- Group HR Manager, The Standard Media Group, Kenya.

## Presentation by panelists

### *i) Dr Sarah Macharia*

Dr Sarah Macharia discussed how the gap in women's representation in high editorial positions hinders women from issuing policies and regulations that account for women's needs. One of the most prominent organizations in Africa that pushes legislative efforts in media toward more female inclusion in important decision-making efforts is the Moroccan High Authority Audiovisual Communication (HACA), which represents a strong example of how the conundrum that women face in the media sphere should be tackled. i.e., with strong female leadership (Dr Amina Lemrini and Latifa Akharbach) and a critical spirit that doesn't yield to patriarchal domination.

Dr Sarah Macharia concluded that change happens with self-regulation as a starting point. When the individuals involved in the media sphere learn how to self-regulate toward making an environment where women thrive, positive change occurs. Self-regulation is far more powerful than government control in creating positive change because it doesn't require an implicit law issued by politicians to be implemented. Self-regulation is the product of developing a moral compass with high ethical considerations.

### *ii) David Omwoyo- Perspectives from the Media Council of Kenya.*

David Omwoyo discussed how media content shapes what people perceive. Media cannot, on its own, promote equality in a passive manner by merely reporting issues. Having strong policies is important because policies can guarantee that there's a certain level of gender balance by implementing change from the top down. However, it's hard to implement policies that promote gender equality in societies that don't believe in such values. Therefore, what he termed as "a cultural monster" needs to be defeated, i.e., the misogynistic attitudes that characterize African countries. He went on to say that the media should not only raise awareness but also play an integral role in educating the populace. The way forward is to allow the media to support groups that advocate for women's rights.

He invoked the notion of editorial impunity, which is when a story is too juicy, and the editorial teams allow it to be published even though it spreads negative gender stereotypes. Such widespread practices in African media aren't exactly ethical. In turn, he proposed that there should be a limit to what the media is allowed to publish, especially when it's content that promotes misogyny and negative gender stereotypes.

*iii) Bethlehem Negash Woldeyohannes- Gender in Ethiopian Media Landscape.*

Bethlehem Negash Woldeyohannes pointed out how journalism is persistent in being a male-dominated field. There's a small percentage of women in high positions (managers and editors), which is something that hinders women from reaching their full potential. The media keeps reproducing and spreading gender stereotypes. There's gender-based division when assigning roles to females and males in media.

However, it should be noted that things are looking up. The situation is no longer draconian as it used to be, thanks to the efforts of many benevolent actors all over Africa and the world, such as the people involved with the AWiM Conference.

The way forward must push for having more boards of directors become more diverse, i.e., women must occupy key roles in decision-making positions. High positions should no longer be dominated by males. Media houses should exercise ethical conduct by opening up to high-value women in a meritocratic manner.

In addition to that, the media should give women more airtime, especially in politics. With women in power, it would be easier to implement policies that protect women. For example, hate speech content that negatively impacts women should not be allowed to propagate.

Finally, in-house policies on gender equality can greatly improve the situation, which is why it's important to have a strong legislative body that legally seeks to improve the situation for women. The actionable step is establishing systems that allow women to thrive in media positions.

*iv) Tumwesigire Hillary Peace- Gender equality in media, how to tack and respond on gender gaps, gender discrimination and sexual harassment in Rwanda Media Industry.*

Tumwesigire Hillary Peace discussed how men dominate the media business by a majority, which is something that doesn't allow women to thrive. Female journalism graduates don't pursue a career in journalism because of the unbalanced, unjust situation of media companies that prevent them from being comfortable in such positions. One of the most prominent issues women face in the workplace is their sexuality being used against them. The media sphere isn't a stranger to inciting women to use their sexuality to climb the corporate ladder. Women are encouraged to give sexual favors instead of working hard to reach better positions in the workplace.

Such practices must be stopped. Women should receive training on dealing with problems that might arise in the workplace related to sexual harassment. Also, Women must be supported during hardships and taught how to deal with them in a constructive way.

*v) Joy Kaguri- Gender Policies and Regulations: Lessons from The Standard Media Group.*

Joy Kaguri discussed that policies at the human resource level make the workplace safe and more comfortable for women. Being a human resource personnel herself, her insight comes from a very profound place of experience, experience with women who really struggle in the workplace.

She pointed out that making policies is as actionable as actionability can be, i.e., policies must be implemented and followed accordingly by everyone. Policies that account for women's needs must protect them during vulnerability (maternity, sexual harassment). In addition to that, recruitment policies still need more improvements.

Career growth, compensation, and benefits must also be accounted for in the policy-making process. Policies at the level of human resource support strategic business thinking, and policies to ensure equal gender representation in recruitment are also something to strive for as far as actionable actions are concerned.

## **Conclusion**

This panel yielded very productive discussions that underpinned the importance of policy and policy regulations in media organizations. The speakers set out actions that can be taken towards developing and implementing policies that start with the ensuring that women in media have both technical and soft skills, ensuring that women in media have a clear path for career progression and the right structures of mentorship that help them get there and importantly and pertinently, ensuring equity in leadership positions. Further, these actions taken together not only support a more productive workplace but also support the organization's business goals.



# Representation and communication of mental health in the media.



## Abstract

Mental Health is increasingly becoming an important topic of discussion and even more so, in our media organizations. This panel will focus its discussions on the depiction of mental illness in the media, the impact of the ‘culture of silence’ that is prevalent among journalists and the use of other forms of media as tools for therapy.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator: Professor Mohammed Yachoulti- Professor, Moulay Ismail University, Morocco.

- i) Sharon Nkanim Ugbo- Student, Babcock University, Nigeria.
- ii) Ruth Tilley Gyado- Journalist, Nigeria.
- iii) Ladi Yakubu- Post Graduate Student, Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Sharon Nkanim Ugbo- Representations & communication of mental health in the media: Female journalists on the frontline.*

Sharon Nkanim Ugbo’s presentation focused on the mental health of journalists on the frontline, emphasizing the role of the media in changing people’s perceptions about mental illnesses. She went on to depict the current state of the depiction of mental illness in the media as mostly sensationalized and distorted. She referenced studies that have proved a strong link between social media and deteriorating mental health and concluded that most of the depictions of social media were not a clear portrayal.

In Nigeria for example, she revealed that the film industry, Nollywood, has worsened perceptions about mental health due to their portrayal of mental illnesses. She went on to add that these negative reinforced stereotypes on TV interfere with how mental health issues are treated in workplaces. Other factors such as gender, ethnicity and religious biases have made it even more of a challenge to confront mental health issues and seek help for their mitigation.

Professions such a journalism, and journalists, she explained, were at high risk of psychological strain due to the nature of their work. She stated that the major problem her study tried to investigate was the rising case on mental health issues and the mis and dis information that surround it. Stigma plays a huge role in trivializing the effects of mental health issues and here is where she explicitly stated that the media has a role to play in how it communicates mental health.

She concluded that there are few to no available measures in workplaces and media organizations to deal with trauma. To change the narrative, she offered the following viewpoints and recommendations

- The media needs to dispel negative imagery of mental illness by creating content that tells a complete story of a mental health situation.
- The media needs to break the cultural biases and narratives about mental health sufferers to reduce stigmatization, and encouraged reintegration into society.
- There is need for collective representation of mental health in media and other relevant agencies to educate the public on mental health.
- There is the need for balanced presentations of the effects of mental health, especially for journalists who are exposed to dangerous are as of reportage.
- Media organizations should work in collaboration with the government and other stakeholders in providing help to affected staff.
- Media supervisory agencies should ensure that media organizations domesticate therapy and counseling and ensure that staff exposed to trauma avail themselves for these provisions.

*ii) Ruth Tilley Gyado- Mental Health and the media.*

In her presentation, Ruth Tilley Gyado focused on what the media can and should do in its representations of mental health. Beyond its mandate, she asked how the media can better represent people's psychological needs, their social wellbeing, their cognition, perception and behavior. She brought to light the romanticization of mental health issues in current media content and how the media fraternity might grapple with the implications of this.

She further elaborated that there are significant repercussions to inaction, such as, making it difficult for those struggling with mental health to speak up, the lack of a safe haven for people who need it, increasing rates of loneliness and suicide. She concluded by emphasizing that the media is at the frontline of mental health advocacy and communication

*iii) Ladi Yakubu- Social Media and Mental Health of Women and Girls in Africa: The responsibility of the Government.*

As her presentation title suggests, Ladi Yakubu put the spotlight on the Government and the role that it plays in regulating the digital space, and specifically, social media's effect on mental health. She highlighted studies that have documented exhaustively the effects of social media on teenagers and specifically, young girls. She went on to list these effects as depression, anxiety, loneliness, FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), self-harm, body image concerns and in the extreme, suicidal thoughts.

She drilled down her presentation to describe the African context and impacts of social media to African girls and proffered some solutions to counter the negative effects of social media such as; stringent legislation to litigation by parents of affected persons, regulations to filter content on social media platforms and a Digital Services Act that compels platforms to moderate hate speech and injurious content.

To conclude her presentation, she highlighted the below actionable steps for African Governments to take, noting that the overall aim was to be able to use the instrumentalities of law and regulation to check the excesses of social media platforms and safeguard the mental health of user particularly women and girls. They are:

- African governments must be sensitized to acknowledge the negative effects of social media usage on the mental health of its users.
- Governments must be concerned with the safety and mental health and wellbeing of their citizens while using social media platforms, as opposed to restricting usage and access.
- Governments should intervene with appropriate regulations and laws.
- They should also develop structures for the monitoring and regulation of the operations of social media companies.

## **Conclusion**

The panel concluded with passionate insights from the speakers on the role of media and government in facilitating mental health wellbeing, most of which they had highlighted in their presentations. It became increasingly clear that the media's mandate extended beyond reporting news to the proscription of culture and overall care for their audience. In turn the media remains a powerful messenger of the increasingly insidious issue of Mental Health. They should therefore do this wholistically by telling the complete story, avoiding stereotypes and making sure their content is representative.

Structurally, the panelists concurred that models of regulation such as those by the European Union can similarly be modelled and applied in the African context since the negative effects of social media in the global North were not very different from those in the global South.

**Misogyny in  
Moroccan Society:  
Deconstructing the representation of  
Moroccan women in online and  
mainstream media.**





## Abstract

This panel sought to deconstruct in detail the image of Moroccan women in media. The presentations focused on providing an account of how women are depicted in media through processing issues including discrimination, stereotypes, inequality, and abuse. Also, the presentations called for the need to understand women's agency in contemporary media from various perspectives.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator: Professor Slaoui Souad- Chairperson, Sidi Mohammed Benabdellah University, Fez-Morocco.

- i) Hassane Bouthiche- Ph.D., Sidi Mohamed Benabdellah University, Morocco.
- ii) Zineb El Abboubi- Ph.D., Chouaib Doukkali University, Morocco.
- iii) Rachid Lamghari- Ph.D., Sidi Mohamed Benabdellah University, Morocco.

## Presentations by panelists

- i) *Hassan Bouthiche- The representation of Moroccan female politicians in media.*

Hassan Bouthiche provided a general background about how women politicians have received various stereotypes in terms of their ability and quality. The data on female coverage of female politicians shows women's improvement in print radio and television. But the evidence he used to show this misrepresentation derived from Al Masae and Al Sabah that showed women are inferior in Morocco which was considered conservative and liberal. These sources showed the elections of 2009 in which women were not present in most parties due to discrimination. The main reason behind this is that women are not capable of handling big positions which in fact was a concern for the government.

- ii) *Zineb El Abboubi- Modern misogyny: an analysis of the speech of the red pill community in Morocco"*

Zineb El Abboubi presented the results from the study above by outlining different resources extracted from social media platforms (Facebook) to show how the red pill community violated women in a stereotypical view, depicting a Moroccan woman's place in the kitchen. Zineb's review of this theme was depicting women in various types of misrepresentation not only in social media but extends in the cinema (The matrix, Blairs 2012, Mountford 2018). She described the red pill community as having toxic masculinity as seen by the red pill community which explains examples of violence against women both verbally through social media and physically.

- iii) *Rachid Lamghari- Progressive Images of Moroccan Female Migrants in Contemporary Moroccan-Dutch Cinema.*

Rachid Lamghari's case study discussed the manifestations of the orientalist discourse by analyzing the concept of heterogeneous images in the Moroccan Dutch film "Meskina" (2021). The film associated the veil of oppression and the agency which was represented by the character "Malika". The film also addressed Muslim women which singled out as a group in particular need of emancipation. Rachid extracted a sentence from the film Meskina to display discrimination and inequality. "I don't mind cleaning things but I don't iron" to which the man answers "no problem no problem, then you'll clean my car and I will iron" She rhetorically asks the audience "what do you see when you look at me? How? A rejected woman? A home wrecker? A gold digger? A whore? Because you are allowed to call a woman who doesn't do exactly what you want..." Rachid tried to show how the misrepresentation of women in media is directed through the character of Malika in the film Meskina which is a perfect example of a distorted image of migrant Moroccan women which described as a traditional backward and victim which is negative.

Most of these questions raised a critical issue about how media plays an important role to manipulate the issues of Moroccan women. Zineb El Abboubi commented on question number four explaining the influence of high-status people in social media tends to spread messages which, make the audience grab the negative side of the message and apply it, also emphasized the lack of content moderators to control this kind of community. In return, Rachid commented on the last question stating that issues should be addressed before they happen, besides adopting the concept of normalization which is a cause and solution so that to speak out your issues freely.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude the panel, all speakers covered Moroccan women from a different angle which shows the real picture of inequality in media. Moroccan women have consistently been misrepresented in media, both within Morocco and in international coverage. They are often portrayed as submissive and oppressed, with little agency or power. This narrative is not only inaccurate, but it also serves to reinforce harmful stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination against Moroccan women. It is important for media outlets to be more mindful of the way they portray Moroccan women, and to strive for more nuanced and accurate representation. This can be achieved through more diverse representation in media production, as well as more careful and responsible reporting on issues related to Moroccan women. By working towards more balanced and fair representation, the media can play a positive role in challenging and dismantling harmful stereotypes and promoting a more just and equal society.

# Media and Global challenges (Peace, Climate change and Food security).



## Abstract

This panel explored the intersection of globalization and the media, discussing issues such as gender and climate change, global warming and its effects on women, climate justice, and the media narrative around globalization. The panelists offered that vulnerability to climate change differs according to racial and cultural dimensions. The Global Gender gap estimates that women produce over 60% of food in some countries, and 2/3 of 774 million of them are illiterate. Lands are predominantly owned by men. The role of governments in tackling the issue is weak resulting in the intensification of gender inequality. However, men also are affected by climate change, that is, poverty in such countries and lack of resources make men dependent on women. For countering the issue, true stories should be narrated about the effect of climate change. Also, support should be provided to the journalists who bring those stories to light.

## Speakers and Moderator

Session Moderator- Amanda Dory- Director, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, USA.

- i) Dr Linet Lusike Mukhongo- Associate Professor, Western Michigan University, USA.
- ii) Joan Letting- Program Manager, Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative (DLCI), Kenya.
- iii) Dr Ke Cai- Ph.D., Beijing Foreign Studies University & Macquarie University, China.
- iv) Kaneng Rwang-Pam- Director, KRP Communications Ltd & KRP Foundation for Education & Migration Awareness, Nigeria.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr Linet Lusike Mukhongo- Human Activities and Climate Justice: Reframing Media Narratives on Climate Change Mitigation Efforts towards Africa*

Dr Linet Mukhongo's presentation focused on the themes of ecofeminism, media framing, climate justice, climate migration and climate harms & resolutions. The presentation specifically delved into media framing of climate change narratives and mitigation efforts towards Africa with particular emphasis on women from the global South. Her presentation sought to answer the following questions,

- Who are the humans in human activities?
- How do we better frame message, so that those who have created the most harm are called to bear the cost of fixing or making significant amendments?
- How better can the media frame climate change mitigation efforts in a more gender aware and culturally sensitive manner?

She went on to describe how the media frames climate narratives and emphasized the need to critically use gender aware and culturally aware contexts to do so. Meaning that the media should create frames that resonate with the African audiences, and their lived experiences in the midst of Climate Change. She continued that these stories should take into account the multiplicity of women's identities that draw on both on traditional and new identities. She concluded that climate justice is a human rights issue and people should seriously consider restitution strategies and most importantly, to bring women to the conversation as part of the communities most affected by climate change.

- ii) *Joan Letting - Reporting on Gender and Climate.*

Joan Letting's presentation focused on her experiences covering the intersection of gender and climate. She reported that vulnerability differs according to race, class, ability, age, and gender making low-resource areas at increased risk of being affected by climate change. She went on to outline that women are disproportionately affected due to various reasons such as being left out of the decision-making process, they have fewer resources, having less access to education, suffer higher rates of Gender Based Violence and are severely affected by conflict change. She concluded her presentation by emphasizing that reporting on climate change and gender was important and required focusing on human interest stories that showcase the subjects' points of view.



*iii) Dr. Ke Cai- Regional peace, gender and media: An analysis of African Media coverage of the “Chibok Girls.”*

Dr. Ke Cai's ongoing research above focused on answering the following questions, what images of the Chibok girls have been constructed in the media? Does it change over time? And what kind of relationship between women and security is reflected in these images? She reported that a review of this coverage yielded 924 related stories and after much analysis, her research found that coverage changed over time.

She also found that the relationship between women and regional peace was threefold: as victims, as survivors, and as leaders. She noted that some of the language that had been used in the coverage of Boko Haram and the Chibok Girls was harmful and went on to possibly exacerbate the situation.

*iv) Kaneng' Rwang-Pam- The state of Reporting Violence against Women & Girls (VAWG).*

Kaneng Rwang-Pam's presentation was focused on ongoing research conducted by African Women in Media to review the status of reporting VAWG in Nigeria. She shared three distinct highlights from the research objectives but firstly, spoke in detail about the realities of VAWG as a reflection of the pervasive imbalance between men and women.

The three areas of the research focus, as she shared were to increase policy information on VAWG, to increase and improve ethical reporting of VAWG and to empower women to self-actualize professionally within the media industry.

Through this ongoing research, Kaneng Rwang-Pam reported that there was increasing clarity on the lived experiences of media women who report public enlightenment issues and the research was able to identify gender inequalities within the media industry in Nigeria and overall lack of documentation on the subject of VAWG. She concluded a summary of the first objective with the following recommendations that there was need to increase programming that focused on issue of VAWG, to increase media driven RVAWG platforms and to increase the level of sensitization within the media industry on the rights of women journalists in the workplace.

On addressing some of the lived experiences of journalists, she made the following recommendations:

- Women in media have a voice and should speak on their GBV experiences.
- Media women reporting VAWGs need psychological support first aid and mental health support.
- Governments needs to legislate gender equality in the industry to enable women to self-actualize
- Media organizations should mainstream gender responsive policies that protect women in the industry.
- There needs to be collective action between media and CSOs to generate a database of key actors in RVAWG.

# **Workshop: Instituting anti-sexual harassment policies and creating safer working environments in newsrooms.**



## Abstract

This workshop aimed to report on the decrease in the frequency of sexual harassment and the increase in the trust news personnel have in their organization by reviewing anti-sexual harassment policies and communication of these policies. Participants had the opportunity to raise personal concerns about how newsrooms are handling sexual harassment and give recommendations on how to improve.

## Speakers and Moderator

This workshop was presented and moderated by: Dr Lindsey Blumell- Senior Lecturer, University of London.

## Presentation

Dr Lindsey Blumell began her presentation by sharing the results of the 5-year ethnographic study her institute has been doing on anti-sexual harassment policies. She reported that this research was published by Women in News. In her study, surveys were conducted in eight countries namely Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and a total of 576 respondents were interviewed which included executives and people on the ground.

The findings from this research were that 56% of women have experienced verbal harassment and 38% have experienced physical harassment. The most interesting, she noted, is that 31% of women have experienced verbal harassment 5 times or more, and 12% of women have experienced physical harassment 5 times or more which is very high. 22% of men have also experienced harassment but mostly verbal. Then there was a category for gender non-binary which not very many people indicated that they were, but those who did were 50%.

Another interesting part is only 38% said they had no policy 45% said they had policies but no training. Only 16.4% of people said they had a policy and they had training. Unfortunately, in our survey of 576 people, only 6% had a policy and training and at least 30% of people who experience sexual harassment reported it. Most people do not feel confident in the organization to report sexual harassment which is a very big number. From the 30% who did report only 40% of cases were acted on by the organization.

The main challenges that people experience due to sexual harassment were outlined as:

- There is no policy for sexual harassment
- People don't feel comfortable reporting the matter.
- Even if they report, there is only a 40% chance that the organization is going to act upon it.

There was no significant difference between the organizations that had an exchange policy and experience in sexual harassment. This means basically, policies are completely ineffective because whether you have a policy or not, statistically, the chance of you experiencing sexual harassment is the same. Again, there is no significant intricacy between policy and reporting. So, that means even if your organization had a policy, the participants of this survey did not feel more courage to report.

But there was a significance between action and policy training. The only time the policy made any difference is if the organization had done some training. Then there was likely a chance for the organization to act upon it.

In conclusion, Dr Blumell talked of removing the resolution of sexual harassment from the trial aspect but depicting it as a new way of harassment. She feels that the trial aspect is going to have various barriers in the field of sexual harassment. Most of the sexual harassment cases come from the junior staff to the management staff. the majority of the time it happens from top to bottom, and there is no day when HR will investigate them.

# Gender Culture and Violence in Morocco.



## Abstract

The session focused on Moroccan culture and its transition from a strictly patriarchal society to a society allowing women to have a voice. Violence against women is still implicitly embedded in Moroccan cultural values (like any other patriarchal society). However, things are looking up. There's a new wave of critically aware people; among them are women and girls with the potential to be future leaders, following the good example of many women who participated in and organized AWiM22. When new values are spread using media channels, perceptions change, and when perceptions change, the whole structure of society and its hierarchy of values also follow suit.

## Speakers and moderators

Session moderator: Professor Ennaji Moha- President of the International Institute for Languages and Cultures, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco.

- i) Dr. Hayat Naciri- Associate Professor, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Morocco.
- ii) Dr. Fatima Sadiqi- President, Isis Center for Women and Development, Morocco.
- iii) Dr. Moha Ennaji - President of the International Institute for Languages and Cultures, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco.
- iv) Dr. Azize Kour- Lecturer, ENSIAS Mohamed V University, Morocco.

## Presentation by panelists

### *i) Dr. Hayat Naciri*

Dr. Hayat Naciri addressed the issue of violence against women in Morocco. Violence against women is embedded in cultural notions such as virginity and marriage. She added that there's a biased attitude toward women and women's sexuality.

She exemplified this notion by highlighting divorce practices in Morocco where Morocco has more negative connotations about women divorcing than men. Divorced women face many negative stereotypes because of societal conditioning. Domestic violence against women is made to be seen as protecting women. Women are made to believe that it's okay to be dominated by men. The media, she emphasized, plays a big role in reinforcing such stereotypes, especially in visual cultures such as music and movies. She concluded by insisting that women in Morocco must be educated about their rights and this must spread beyond the cities.

### *ii) Dr. Fatima Sadiqi*

Dr. Fatima Sadiqi's speech started by establishing that although the media is feminized on a surface level, intrinsically, it is still rigid and patriarchal. Women in media are in a constant struggle to find safe spaces and creative freedom because of the rigid structures of the media sphere. Patriarchy and patriarchal systems constrain creativity at all levels.

In addition to changing policies, she emphasized that the media must also change public perception through content that is representative of all society. Violence against women persists because of misconceptions and false beliefs. Misconceptions and false beliefs can be countered by the strategic use of language through media channels. The media has the power to obliterate the shackles that hinder women from thriving.

### *iii) Professor Moha Ennaji*

Professor Moha Ennaji started by establishing the fact that it takes time to reform society and change the norms. While implementing policies is a good starting point, that's not enough. For example, signing the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) has improved the situation for women tremendously. Morocco has seen many developments in regard to the guaranteeing of women's political participation. However, Morocco still lags behind because women are reluctant to participate. Women shy away from decision-making positions and the political sphere due to the domination by males of these areas.

Other factors such as poverty, lack of education in rural areas keep the income gap between men and women wide. Professor Moha Ennaji went on to add that even with more than 97% of girls at school, the situation is still far away from perfect. Additionally, changes in marriage law and rape laws have liberated many women from domestic situations that led to violence and suicide, but many misogynistic cultural values are hard to change only by legislation. Moroccan NGOs have done a great job of improving things for women in Morocco.

Professor Ennaji emphasized how new media is a powerful tool that allows women to fight for their own position and propagation. However, social media are a double-edged sword. Women can use social media to transform societies, but the same tool can be used to reinforce the stereotypes that target women. Women, especially young girls, should use new media wisely. It's possible to stop violence against women by using new media to change perceptions, but we're only at the start of that journey.

### *iv) Dr. Azize Kour- Interrogating Sexual Politics in the Post-colonial Moroccan Anglophone Literature: Khalid Bekkaoui's the Voice as a Case Study.*

All in all, Dr. Azize Kour talked about how the variable of gender is used against women. He discussed how post-colonial literature had raised the awareness of women, sparking a wave of feminism in Africa, namely the Maghreb. He also talked about the concepts of self-orientalization and Self-westernization and how they function as cultural studies phenomena.

## **Conclusion**

This panel consisted of Moroccan scholars who showcased how the issue of violence against women is deeply rooted in Moroccan culture. The patriarchal system that once was established to guarantee the safety and prosperity of respectable girls how now become a prison, an oppressive force that drives girls toward having identity crises.

However, there's hope that things will change for the better as we step closer and closer to a future where the dominating force will be that of a generation that's well aware of the oppressive aspects of the system. Reformation takes time, as Professor Moha Ennaji established, as an a priori fact.

# **Understanding feminism and feminist epistemology in media discourse and practice.**





## Abstract

This panel focused on discussions that help understand feminism and feminist epistemology in media and discourse and practice. In the same context, they looked at the stories of Healing in Postcolonial Feminist Filmmaking Journey after Gender-Based Trauma. They also discussed the non-news media representation of women in politics and the collective representation of women in Africa.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator: Professor Slaoui Souad- Chairperson, Sidi Mohammed Benabdellah University, Fez-Morocco.

- i) Deborah Adesina- Media student, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.
- ii) Belinda Nadine Nyanhete- Doctoral student, University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Communication, Media and Society, Zimbabwe.
- iii) Professor Subeshini Moodley- Associate Professor (Lecturer), Nelson Mandela University, South Africa.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) Deborah Adesina- Media representation of women in politics: a critical discourse analysis of Nollywood films.*

Deborah Adesina began her presentation by saying several studies have been conducted to explore the prevailing frames adopted in the representation of women in politics and leadership within newspapers and within other media such as television and radio. However, so little attention has been paid to how filmmakers challenge or reinforce traditional constructions of femininity and power.

Deborah Adesina further highlighted that the rate of female representation on the Nigerian political scene is alarmingly low even compared to other countries in the sub-Saharan African region. The phenomenon of unequal gender representation in the Nigerian political framework is unarguable, this is something that is topical, and practical, and it is something that can be experienced currently with the ongoing presidential elections. Most of the high-profile National Assembly seats such as the Assembly leadership, vice presidency, and the exalted office of the president are as a default seemingly occupied by males.

There are statistics to prove that women are grossly under-represented in political offices as senators and there has been a steady decline from the 2015 election down to the 2019 election. This is the reason why Nigeria ranks 139 out of 149 countries in terms of the gender gap for political empowerment.

In conclusion, she said that there has been a gradual slow but steady improvement in the portrayal of women in Nigeria generally. However, there is a yearning for more.

- ii) Belinda Nadine Nyanhete- Collective action and female representation in Africa.*

Belinda Nadine Nyanhete began her presentation by talking about the ontological representation of women in many vital aspects of life which has for years overtly and subtly reinforced the politics of marginality and obliteration by creating a landscape where hegemonic masculinity rejects the mainstream feminist discourse.

The demerits of relegating feminine ontology to a monolithic domain of bio-determinism or biological essentialism have come under the rigorous scholarly spotlight, within an emerging sociological paradigm where female representation in many aspects of life such as media, politics, and academia is conceptualized within the context of its institutionalization in the society.

The notion of bifurcation of consciousness undergirds marginalized ontologies, in this case, women are conditioned to see reality through the lenses of the male hegemony, and their representation in the media, politics, and academia is totally blurred.

However, Impeccable substantive improvements in the quest for gender equilibrium in political representation is underscored by the share of parliamentary seats held by women in Africa which has increased substantially from 7% in 1990 to around 18% in December 2008. Parliamentary occupation in Africa is infected with the impeccable representation of women in configuring and reconfiguring, contouring and re-contouring, projecting, and re-projecting the needs and views of women in the context of marginality.

Empirical gender studies in Africa confirm that women's ontological representations have increased the legislature's responsiveness to women's policy concerns and also enhances perceptions about the legitimacy of legislators. On average, women legislators are more left-wing, they tend to favour post-materialist policies such as environmental protection, and, most importantly, female parliamentarians are more likely to prioritize issues supported by female voters such as social policy.

She further stated that the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) notes that in Africa women's relative presence in the news has increased from 19% in 2010 to merely 22% in 2015. Women continue to enjoy less than 3 access to ICTs and the violence that women face offline is extending to online spheres. They still do not have access to this technology due to inadequate infrastructure, affordability and availability, language barriers, illiteracy, and even discriminatory social norms.

She concluded by saying that it is mainly institutional as well as other socioeconomic factors for example corruption, that affects the representation of women in Africa.

*iii) Professor Subeshini Moodley- Stories of Healing: The Postcolonial Feminist Filmmaking Journey after Gender-Based Trauma.*

Professor Subeshini Moodley started by saying that her presentation is based on a research study titled "Post-Colonial Feminist Film Practice: Promoting Empowerment and Healing through Storytelling among South African Women Post-Gender-Based Trauma". The study is basically to apply postcolonial feminist film practice as part of the healing process for South African women who have suffered gender-based trauma and the sub-objective would be; to enable women to tell their stories by teaching them how to make films and to engage women in a process of critical self-reflection through dialogue during the making of films.

The objectives of this Film practice is to question the place of the scholar specifically the need to destabilize what is referred to as post-colonial ventriloquism or the speaking 'for' groups of people and then also making concerted methods to move outside of the academy and not just sit within the academy theorizing. They feel and empathize with them and are usually motivated by an ethics professor of care and concern. They encourage hands-on involvement.

The practice also cannot work without an autoethnographic approach which is the need to record the methodological process through what I would refer to as some form of journaling and also generate narratives for creative expression.

The community has to form a central focus and tell either a story as a community or their stories as individuals who are in a community, and it offers a potential voice to the voiceless. These two approaches are consciousness-raising methodological tools, they offer critical reflection on social action, the exposure of social injustice, and the challenging of public stereotypes. They also create awareness of social issues and this creates many possibilities for empowerment specifically for women behind the camera.

## **Conclusion**

The session ended with a conclusive remark from the moderator. As we come from different facets of the media industry, it is really about shifting all of these narratives in a way that we can see women in those places, women leadership, women empowerment, all of those things. Another point is to be united as one which is also what this conference is about and also bringing men into these conversations too and how we can also collaborate on equal representation.

# Women and Media prejudice



## Abstract

This panel deeply investigated the deep level behind the prejudice against women. There's a whole battle of values and ideologies behind every media product. And many of those hidden agendas are not there to serve women. On the contrary, the system uses women and their natural proclamations to advance the interests of those who invest in media.

That's why the spark of change must ignite starting from being aware of such hidden structures in the current system. Keeping a critical eye on media is the first step toward raising awareness and making a change that starts from the bottom up.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator: Kenza Sammoud- Journalist, Morocco.

- i) Sanae Ansar Ech-hotbi- Ph.D., University of Erfurt, Germany.
- ii) Rim Idrissi Azami- Lecturer, Chouaib Doukkali University, Morocco.
- iii) Nabila El Fahmy- Lecturer, University Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah, Morocco.
- iv) Youssef Acim- Sulan Moulay Slimane, Morocco.

## Presentations by panelists.

- i) *Sanae Ansar Ech-hotbi- Le harcèlement numérique est-il le revers de la médaille de l'activisme féministe en ligne?*

Sanae Ansar Ech-hotbi discussed the importance of movements like #masaktach, the Moroccan #metoo, in fighting for women's rights to have safe spaces where their sex can't be used against them. She stated that the media must take feminism more seriously, expose the ideology, and spread it. Feminism should be promoted, according to Sanae. She also talked about the online movements that ridicule feminism, like the Red Pill community, the manosphere, and the MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way). Online misogyny is equal to real-life misogyny. For example, slut-shaming is prevalent online. Feminists are mocked online and made to seem like crazy women. Anti-feminist narratives on Instagram are spreading.

- ii) *Rim Idrissi Azami*

Rim Idrissi Azami started by reminding everyone, "It's about Africa; Africans for Africans." To her, the alien comes from the Western values that infiltrate our culture. And one of the main channels that infiltrate our African cultures is the westernized soap operas we consume. There's a westernization of feminization taking place. She also talked about the stereotypical representation of the feminine in Arab media. The typical feminine stereotypes include the mother, the girlfriend, the wife, and the obedient daughter. Women are not given the opportunity to appear serious. They don't participate in heated political debates.

Soap operas depict women as women's problems. They are portrayed in shallow roles; women are stereotypically portrayed as materialistic, manipulative, shallow followers of men, emotional, and non-intellecutuals. Media persists in reproducing the hedonic cultural narratives associated with women.

Rim Idrissi Azami finished with a call for change. We need to return to the roots of womanhood in Morocco (Africa in general), not the westernized version. And we need to give a voice to marginalized women; those are the real women who are under pressure. Moroccan TV must reconsider its way of portraying women in its soap operas. The aim is to re-educate women about their true potential beyond their physical appearance and sexuality.

*iii) Nabila El Fahmy- La femme marocaine: Thé, Théâtre, Télé ou un passage obligé pour une émancipation désirée.*

Nabila El Fahmy's aim was to assert that women could also occupy high-status positions in religious schools. While the Islamic culture isn't exactly open to women being clergymen, there's certainly a change in attitude. There's no longer a high prejudice against women who teach theology. For example, the speaker, Nabila El Fahmy, rarely struggles with being a female theology teacher at Al-Quarawiyyin University, which is the oldest still-running university in the world.

*iv) Youssef Acim- The female discourse in Little Women.*

Youssef Acim talked about the patriarchy in modern American society and the gender stereotypical narratives that depict women as shallow consumers with no intellectual prowess. The media reinforce the gender narratives we consume, namely movies. A woman is shallow, and she's materialistic. All she cares about is making her way with her desires. This is how modern consumer America depicts women.

However, there's a shift to a feminine discourse of the woman who can be successful on her own. The loner woman. Movies that depict such narratives are counter cinema: the cinema that counters the mainstream. A narrative where women aren't shallow. They are capable of achieving great deeds just like high-value men.

## **Conclusion**

This insightful panel dove deeper into the media narratives that hinder women from achieving their full potential, namely the shallow depiction of women in the media we consume. The media perpetuate prejudice against women. And since the media creates narratives for societies and cultures, change must come from the media signals.

The alien cultural values that come from the West are a double-edged sword. As African societies, we must also cater to those cultural values to account for our cultural standards. Put simply, the patriarchal system needs reformation, a reformation that accounts for women as a creative force. Humanity will only move forwards when its women are satisfied and feel safe, not just in Africa or Morocco.

# Harnessing media for health advocacy, promotion and behavior change communication.



## Abstract

This panel dug deeply into health communication and social media which have become increasingly important tools for health advocacy, promotion, and behaviour change. Through the use of various media platforms, including television, radio, print media, social media, health organizations, and advocates which can reach large and diverse audiences with messages that promote healthy behaviours and lifestyles. Also, advocate for policies and initiatives that support health and well-being, and mobilize individuals and communities to take action on important health issues such as breast Cancer. Effective health communication campaigns utilize a range of strategies, including persuasive messaging, emotional appeals, and targeted outreach, to engage and motivate individuals to adopt healthy behaviours and support positive health outcomes.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator: Dr. Omowumi Bukola Olaseinde- Lecturer, Adeleke University, Nigeria.

- i) Dr. Chinwe Chinau-akpuh- Lecturer, Babcock University, Nigeria.
- ii) Dr. Omowumi Bukola Olaseinde- Lecturer, Adeleke University, Nigeria.
- iii) Gladness Munuo- CEO, Crisis Resolving Center, Tanzania.
- iv) Aidah Munzatsi- Journalist, Kirk TV, Kenya.

## Presentation by panelists.

- i) Dr. Chinwe Chinau-Akpuh- Radio Drama Intervention as an Educational Strategy for Influencing Knowledge and Attitudinal Dispositions toward Early Detection of Breast Cancer.*

In her study doctor, Dr Chinwe Chinau-Akpuh has outlined deeply how the raising incidents of breast cancer that most African women weren't aware of, caused a lot of deaths, especially in Nigeria. Global cases new cases rose to 19.3 million and 10 million deaths (IARC 2020). The problem Dr Chinwe tackled is that addressing to discourage the impacts of the noted risk factors requires evidence-based health interventions at all levels. To solve this problem of deaths due to breast cancer WHO suggested in 2018 that health education targeting improving citizens' knowledge about the disease is "germane". Dr Chinwe also insisted in her study on raising awareness among people towards breast Cancer which proved that will provide infected people to get a positive attitude. The Radio Drama program was a way to this awareness, it tested to be positive for females who proved to be infected. So, her research findings found that Radio Drama has proven to be helping infected. Dr Chinwe concluded her performance by raising saying, "Breast Cancer was impacted both in knowledge and attitude"

- ii) Gladness Munuo- Abstract for SRHR advocacy through media to promote safe reproductive health in Africa – A case study of Tanzania.*

The theme Gladness Munuo observed in her study is the SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) through media. She urged for the need to move the gender justice agenda from the past 2015 era to include individual and collective voices to advocate for change. Through her performance, Gladness stated that most SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries have comprehensive sexual education CSE international standards but the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are still weak. Gladness has also discussed Gender-based violence and its relation with the harmful practices that SADAK countries have undertaken, besides showing the roles of media in this context. Media was an active player in the development of society, shaping attitudes and perceptions regarding certain issues including the balance in new coverage. She concluded her performance with a quote: "Media is for raising voices of the voiceless"



*iii) Aidah Munzatsi- Innovative Health Communication Solutions for Improvement of Perinatal Mental Health in Early Teenage Girls Pregnancy in Rural Kenya*

Aidah Munzatsi in her study observed females' experiences during pregnancy and after biology. She found that the majority (80%) had severe depression with 20% had contemplated suicide due to the pressure of not being capable to handle family problems including pregnancy at a young age. She shared cases in which female young moms claimed the violence they faced included slapping, insulting, and all kind of physical violence. She concluded her performance by proposing solutions for these young females who need counselling, a clinic place of security, mental guidance through camps accompanied with educative videos and posters in health to raise awareness of their rights, and finally providing mentorship classes to nurses so that to know how to talk effectively.

*iv) Dr. Omowumi Bukola Olaseinde- influence of digital media on awareness of endometrial cancer among Nigerian women in South-West Nigeria.*

Dr Omowumi Bukola Olaseinde introduced her study in the light of calling for the need to sensitize emotional Cancer. She suggested Health Believe Model as a reference to show how people inspire themselves to be aware of this issue of emotional Cancer. Her findings showed that the majority of women (78%) don't engage with emotional Cancer information despite the importance this model indicates. It seemed to her that people still see emotional Cancer as making nonsense in reality due to the belief of people in concrete objects.

## **Conclusion**

This panel spoke to issues African women still face numerous violations in various ways. The finding of speakers proved these issues and called for the need to sensitize people using media. Harnessing media for health advocacy, promotion, and behaviour change communication can be an effective strategy for reaching a wide audience and promoting positive health behaviours including psychology and emotional Cancer. It is important, however, to carefully consider the audience and the appropriate channels to use in order to maximize the impact of health advocacy efforts. So, by crafting messages and choosing the right channels, health organizations can effectively promote healthy behaviours and advocate for important health issues. Ultimately, harnessing media for health advocacy, promotion, and behaviour change communication can lead to improved health outcomes and a stronger, healthier society.

# Understanding digital media as new platforms for misogyny, identities online and safety of women.



## Abstract

The speakers in this panel explored the democratization of digital media and the proliferation of tech-facilitated gender-based violence in addition to women's socio-economic inequalities offline.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator: Dr Amina Salihu- Senior Program Officer, MacArthur Foundation.

- i) Nancy Marangu - Communication & Public Policy Analyst, Kenya.
- ii) Dr Ere Mendie Amapamoere Jennifer- Lecturer, De Montfort University, United Kingdom.
- iii) Dr. Kutlwano Lumka Mokgwathi-Lecturer, University of Botswana, Botswana.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) Nancy Marangu - Persons with disabilities news access through social media platforms in Kenya.*

Nancy Marangu started by highlighting the findings of research carried out in Kenya. Based on the findings the use of social media platforms has gradually increased especially the use of WhatsApp, followed by Facebook, then YouTube. According to the data portal in Kenya in 2022, it shows that the use of WhatsApp has gradually grown to about 89%, and the use of Facebook to about 9.5 million users. But as the progression of these communications channels continues to grow because of the connectivity and the internet, there is one population that we are leaving behind. That is people with disabilities.

More findings indicated that the sources of information, and the different platforms that people with disabilities go to look for information from include Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. They had the highest number of respondents.

Some of the information that people were accessing on social media platforms include:

- News
- Information about campaigns in Kenya. It was during the transition period between different regimes. People wanted to find out what was happening for the sake of the socio-political environment.
- Information for the different presidential candidates.

Currently, people are still accessing the news because they want to remain aware of what is happening.

The study also found out that we have social media with us, but much more needs to be done for inclusivity. As much as social media is bringing in real-time information sharing, the issue of misinformation and disinformation is also coming up. It's an emerging issue that we also must address among people with disabilities because they easily trust, and they easily follow. So, it's up to experts and policymakers to be sure that the information shared is credible, trustable, and objective.

Some of the barriers that people with disabilities face when accessing information through social media platforms include:

- For the deaf, there is a lack of sign language interpreters
- Within rural households, there is a lack of electricity
- Illiteracy - within rural households in villages people depend on vernacular means of communication. What they have heard through their local community leaders, or through their groups, is what they believe. Most times these community leaders may not have, accurate information and new information that is current.

Some of the recommendations made from this study include:

- There is a need to provide accessible technological assistive devices for people with disabilities within social media platforms. And this is the responsibility for all those who influence policies to those who create the platforms.
- Need to have research regionally, that embodies people with disabilities on their active voice on their accessibility of social media platforms.

The implication of this study is that the personnel who are communication experts should come up with an agenda of inclusion. On the issue of policies and development of policies, Jennifer said that they have various working groups to put people together to work to achieve a particular thing. Everybody has equal opportunities to contribute to the framework of these policies.

*ii) Dr Ere Mendie Amapamoere Jennifer- A call for data justice in Nigeria's digital media sphere.*

Dr Ere Mendie Amapamoere started her presentation by arguing that the evolution of social media reduces the risk of activists' exposure to torture by the police or security agents, in physical environments. Nigerian citizens are often concerned about their well-being. Such as freedom of speech and expression, marginalized voices, an increase in the unemployment rate, and insecurity. Such uprisings bring about protests in the form of strikes and mass demonstrations on the streets. And recently, on digital platforms such as social media.

Repressive governments make use of social media to suppress decently. An example is the enactment of social media legislation to suppress dissent such as the cybercrime act. activists argue that protests via online environments such as social media can yield high success rates if followed by offline protests in physical environments. In Nigeria, 2012 recorded the protest movement that gained global recognition, in the sense that labour unions, top celebrities, ordinary people, and civil society organizations came together in mass protest.

She further stated that Internet censorship has controlled a suspension of online content including all that can be viewed, accessed, and published on the internet. Internet censorship, therefore, puts restrictions on information that can be publicized like any information deemed to be sensitive, pornographic, or harmful to certain classes of individuals. Besides blocking and filtering, internet censorship may influence content removal and internet shutdown.

In the Nigerian cyberspace, the state adopts judicial and quasi-obnoxious models such as draconian and anti-democratic bills to avert online abuses by users. Nigeria's initial internet censorship attempt was a 1995 draft proposal of electronic devices, telecommunication, and crucial offense in security, which conveys sanctions for the perpetrators of cybercrime in the Nigerian territory. The 2011 cyber security bill, computer security, and infrastructure bill, and criminal court amendment for offenses related to computer misuse, are some of the early proposals to control cyberspace by the Nigerian state.

To conclude her presentation, she argued that without clearly defined digital protection laws in Nigeria, the use of social media as the platform through which you could keep the state becomes a means for gathering intelligence and enacting impunity and justice for the social activists.

*iii) Dr. Kutlwano Lumka Mokgwathi – Digital Alpha males, examining podcasts as used sites of misogyny.*

Dr Kutlwano Lumka Mokgwathi started her presentation by saying that 'podcast and chill' is a representation of discourses within the manosphere and the significance of conducting a multi-model study that examines the relationship between podcasts and the prevalence of misogyny.

Podcasts began in 2004, but 2018 was a significant cultural year for the platform. The popularity of podcasts grew to new heights during the covid-19 pandemic, where people struggled with isolation, mental health, physical health, boredom fatigue, and fear. The popularity is also due to one, connectivity, community, and escapism. To elaborate further, audiences create networks amongst themselves based on like-minded communities. Hence podcasts can be perceived and understood to be echo chambers.

The very first episode of the podcast was released in July of 2018, and in early 2019 the “podcast and Chill’ celebrity edition premiered featuring conversations with South African artists, celebrities, and entertainment personalities. What began with one premier podcast has since grown into a network of 5+ weekly podcasts with over 600 hundred episodes of podcasts, and 500K subscribers, that was in 2019 but now they have grown to 800 thousand subscribers on YouTube. With over 70 million views across all of their videos. Their podcasts are available across multiple platforms such as Spotify and iTunes. Their podcasts are also shared on Twitter and often trend.

Black women may experience dehumanization and sexual objectification doubling, due to racialized stereotypes such as Jezebel which is the modern-day equivalent to the slay queen. These categories created to confine black women in particular, create an environment that perpetuates the belief that black women are less truthful and more to blame for the violence, discrimination of assault, and rape that they experience.

In conclusion, researchers argue that black women are not protected on purpose because it is beneficial to those that participate in all the attacks and misogynoir. The misogyny profitability is a formula that men such as the deceased Kev Samuel, Peterson, and Mark G have.

## **Conclusion**

The session ended after an interactive round of questions and answers and the panelists highlighted as recommendations the following key points:

- There is a need to provide accessible technological assistive devices for people with disabilities within social media platforms, and this is the responsibility of all those who influence policies and those who create the platforms.
- There is a need to have research regionally, that embodies people with disabilities and their active voice on their accessibility of social media platforms.
- There is a need for a sustainable data protection law that is clearly defined and that can protect citizens
- There is a need to regulate the uptake of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence to create convergence.
- Journalists ought to be trained in disability etiquette.
- There is a need to provide attachment and apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities and this training and many like it has to be accessible and all-inclusive.

# Media practice and visual representation



## Abstract

This panel will discuss models in media practice and how they can be applied in the age of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news. The panelists will also examine gender balance in content in media and the ideological, legal, economic, and professional challenges in collective action.

## Speakers and Moderator

Session moderator: Professor Mohammed Moubtassime- Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.

- i) Dr Rachel Diang'a- Assistant Professor of Film/Chair of Cinematic Arts Department, United States International University Africa, Kenya.
- ii) Dr Ifeoma Theresa Amobi- Lecturer, University of Lagos, Nigeria.
- iii) Farah Wael- Senior Manager, Digital and Insights, WAN-IFRA Women in News, Egypt.
- iv) Carolyn Ashaba-Journalist, One Africa Media, Uganda.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr Rachel Diang'a- Symbiotic Relationship between Television and Film in Africa.*

Dr Rachel Diang'a started by saying film and TV have had a very interesting relationship over time since their inception and history. The two media are quite dependent though they also stand out uniquely as disciplinary with unique disciplinary elements. The film is older than TV and when TV emerged, it was quickly ranked lower in the hierarchy of the arts. TV was not necessarily invented as an art, but more of a mass communication medium. When TV came in, it started taking some space of the art forms that existed because it provided entertainment, get together moments for families and redeemed the time that probably would have been allocated to going to watch movies in the theatres or watch a play in the theatre or an orchestra. Festivals, and awards, always tend to recognize film and television alongside each other which also gives a very interesting relationship between film and television.

Since the two have a relationship, it is rare to find information about the evolution of TV in Africa, but it is easier to find information and research that have been done on the rise of TV in Europe from 1936 and in Northern America 1939 since it needs more researching and more documentation.

The Moroccan television station in 1954 marked the beginning of the TV age in Africa, while others maintain that this was seen first in Nigeria in 1959 and other countries like Algeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Senegal, now launched their TV stations in the late 50s and early to mid-'60s. At the same time, the film emerged as a medium, as an art form to articulate political, economic, and cultural issues that were happening in society at that time.

The relationship between TV and film becomes stronger because most people watch a lot of African films on television. We probably never knew where they could go and watch some of these films, but currently, they sit in front of their TV and the film comes up.

Some of the symbiotic relationships between TV and film that emerged from different research conducted include:

- A weaker TV network is connected to a weaker film content exhibition. This close relationship between TV and film is seen in a case in Uganda in the 2000s where the lack of TV satellite contributed to a poor exhibition of Uganda films.
- A decolonized film culture thrives well in a colonized media space.

Dr Rachel Diang'a further discussed that the African film industry had been marred by a number of challenges that have been well documented. They range from:

- Coastal production, which has always been an issue in different seasons, and different ages of filmmaking in Africa.
- Plagiarism and piracy
- Distribution.

She concluded by saying that in the twenty 21st century things have moved quite fast and computers and the internet have led to more complex ways of utilizing film and TV. Anything happening in the West, the people in Africa can still get to see or hear about it. All information can be accessed through gadgets like phones, TV, etc. So, the boundary between the two is becoming less in terms of presentation and consumption.

ii) *Dr. Ifeoma Theresa Amobi- Gender- behind-the-cameras: Women's Career Experiences in Television Production in Lagos, Nigeria.*

Dr. Ifeoma Theresa Amobi began her presentation by highlighting that the issue of gender equity continues to be at the centre of public debate as feminist scholars, women's movements and critics have continued to bemoan the inequity in the treatment of men and women.

She further said that women are being subjugated and marginalized in various spheres of life. This issue has attracted several women's conferences culminating in the emergence of the Millennium. Development Goals. This is one of the promotions of gender equality and women empowerment.

This issue has attracted significant research as scholars have interrogated the participation and portrayal of women in different walks of life including media. The majority of these studies have focused on the portrayal of women in the media and their participation in the print and broadcast media. They focus on how women are depicted in front of the camera in films and television and their participation in traditional mass media agencies.

She further highlighted that studies on the participation of women behind the camera in traditional mass media agencies in Nigeria are rare.

The findings of Dr Ifeoma Theresa Amobi's 2013 research upheld those of previous studies in which the results show that in Nigeria men produce an overwhelming majority of messages in the mass media. Findings of 2018 showed that men occupy more technical roles and decision-making positions in the film production process. On the other hand, women have taken a few forward leaps in writing and video editing roles with an average of 12.5% of women occupying top positions in the Nollywood agencies.

Some of the power factors that were identified as inducing the imbalance include sexism, discrimination, limited funding, and the absence of female role models.

She mentioned some theoretical underpinning factors that also contributed to the imbalance:

- Culture has been a formidable force that has continued to relegate women to the background.
- Long-held myths derived from culture have continued to promote strategies aimed at reinforcing the sordid presentation of women.
- Culture and cultural products have perpetuated patriarchal hegemony all in line with men's domineering configuration.

From the results of a study carried out, it emerged that 60% of the females occupied non-managerial positions, 20% are in mid-level positions, 16% were in managerial positions, and 4% occupied top positions. In terms of gender equity behind the camera, 88% believe that they have equal salaries with their male counterparts. Another 88% said they had been promoted in their job and 80% of them believe that they have been promoted at the same time as their male counterparts. 90% of them also said that they have equal training opportunities with their male counterparts. 60% of them said that they do not have to work harder to get equal treatment as a male as their male counterparts. So, they feel that the treatments are equal. And 76% of them said they have an equal way of freedom to deal with issues in their offices and to deal with their subordinates as well. 80% of them do not believe that the men or their male counterparts have an unfair advantage over them, or are given more opportunities over them.

Dr Ifeoma Theresa Amobi concluded by saying that from the findings of the study, gender equity was beginning to record an upward trajectory and that media organizations are making a deliberate effort through policies to create gender parity in the workplace.

They further support the IWMF global report (2011) which showed that in Nigeria, women, and men journalists are paid equally, or in some cases, women's salaries exceed the men's wages.



They also support Dr Ifeoma Theresa Amobi's 2018 study on the influence of power factors on the access of women to be behind-the-camera roles in Nigeria's Nollywood industry which found that women were beginning to make forward leaps.

However, to totally overcome this imbalance, some sociocultural factors underlying the imbalance have to be completely overcome. The following recommendations were made to ensure this is met:

- Make conscious efforts to include women in technical roles, hitherto considered the exclusive preserve of men, instead of assigning soft tasks to them.
- Come up with a sustainable media sensitization campaign aimed at getting women to believe in themselves and not to assume that their biological differences inhibit their ability to work behind the camera.
- Women should not allow themselves to be considered weak by angling for tasks that are easier or asking their male counterparts to assist them, or outrightly performing the hard tasks that are assigned to them.

### *iii) Farah Wael- Gender Balance in content in Media.*

Farah Wael started her presentation by discussing gender balance in leadership. She emphasized knowing the problem and how deep it is and then working actively towards finding the solutions to overcome this problem. In 2022, Women in News analyzed data from 192 media organizations within 17 countries in which they operated to document who holds the top editorial and top business positions in each company by gender. These companies were selected based on their size and audience. From the findings, it was observed that women take up only 26% of top editorial positions in 28 countries. Zero out of 17 markets did the percentage of women holding top business positions exceed 25% with the Philippines leading with 22%. In 2 out of 17 markets, the percentage of women holding top editorial positions was skewed in favour of women. In the Philippines, 78% of the chief editor positions were held by women followed by Zambia with women holding 57% of the top editorial positions. In 5 out of 17 countries, no woman held the highest business position. This includes countries like Rwanda, Kenya, Somalia, Palestine, and Jordan. In Somalia no woman held the top editorial position as of 2022, followed by Egypt, where only 9% of the top editorial positions were filled by women.

And if we ask ourselves why there are so few women in leadership positions, we also have to recognize the challenges faced by women in the workplace, and one of the biggest challenges to seeing women in leadership positions in the media industry into the honest everywhere else is sexual harassment in the workplace. A major research study was conducted and it was reported that 41% of women or non-conforming individuals face verbal or physical sexual harassment at work.

Some of the concrete actions that Farah Wael mentioned to be taken to increase women in leadership positions include:

- Conduct a diversity audit
- Organize gender equality, diversity, and inclusion training for management teams
- Ensure health benefits, pension, or stock options are available equally.
- Make compensation and employment opportunities equitable.
- Identify high-potential employees of various diversity categories and include them in the succession plan.
- Be explicit and public in commitment to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion and what means for the media organization.

In the discussion about gender balance in content, Farah Wael mentioned that the media fails to represent women as equals and stereotypes them in their job cycle roles or attributes. The four main indicators that can help measure gender-balancing content are:

- Prominence of women - measured by counting how many times a woman or a man or mentioned in a story.
- Women as main characters - how you define a main character is how prominently featured a person is.
- Women as authors - Who is creating the content that we are publishing and consuming?
- Women as sources - women are less likely to be featured in the subject of a story or quoted as compared to men.

*iv) Carolyn Ashaba- An analysis to understand collective action and representation in Media.*

Caroline Ashaba started her presentation by highlighting that media practice is a wide model that can range from news making to filmmaking, content creation, and mass communication and large. With the new technologies and growth of new media today, a journalist could say it just got better as wider concepts of the field have been introduced.

She further stated that various studies show that journalism or media practice in Africa is still facing so many challenges, caused especially by the laws and regulations that govern that industry. These laws have long been unfavorable to the practice, hence limiting the journalists in so many ways as journalists or media practitioners. Media practitioners take so many risks to deliver their best stories yet, on the other hand, they are despised in so many ways. Some of the things that have affected the ethical values of journalists include:

On a positive note, we appreciate the new media culture which has taken root in almost all parts of the world. It has given journalists mileage in terms of their work. Media independence has improved, an element that has encouraged many media practitioners to work better and be visible. On the other hand, visual representation in the media has improved based on the fact that it used to be one-sided, especially on the side of the men, but today women are glad that it is on the journey of getting balanced although there is still a lot that needs to be done to implement the representation of media.

One of the importance of media representation is that it influences the way people see journalists. Authentic representation creates powerful role models and is a source of inspiration in many ways.

Women's representation in visual culture has increased in areas of politics where there is a fairly good number of women taking on parliamentary seats and other niche political roles as compared to back in the day. The field of economics is also toying with the increasing number of women-led businesses. Unfortunately, in the media space, the representation of women is mostly in a negative or unappealing way. This has been with the case, especially in social media and some traditional media, when it comes to the stereotypical kind of news in which women are indirectly harassed. In the newsrooms, there is still a glass ceiling on which stories women should report and those they should not. In general, all forms of media, including the film industry still has a challenge with visualization of women, thus keeping the percentage of women under-representation high.

Some of the actions that Caroline Ashaba mentioned that need to be taken include:

- Working upon shadows of culture that makes women feel that they cannot achieve success through doing what they love to do.
- Educating and sensitizing to have a better, well-visualized working environment
- Shift our minds from stereotypes to realities
- Embrace opportunities
- Have space created for both men and women to explore their potential.

## **Conclusion**

The session ended with a reflection on all the recommendations listed in the summary as follows:

- Media organizations must make conscious efforts to include women in technical roles, hitherto considered the exclusive preserve of men, instead of assigning soft tasks to them.
- The media landscape must come up with a sustainable media sensitization campaign aimed at getting women to believe in themselves and not to assume that their biological differences inhibit their ability to work behind the camera.
- Women should not allow themselves to be considered weak by angling for tasks that are easier or asking their male counterparts to assist them, or outrightly performing the hard tasks that are assigned to them.

# Panel: Women in politics in partnership with Luminate.



## Abstract

This panel focused on discussions on the role of the media in the representation of women in the political sphere and how this aligns to policies on gender and development. The panel further discussed how the digitization of political activism impacts women's involvement in politics and other women-led movements.

## Speakers and Moderator

Session moderator- Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola- CEO & Co-Founder, African Women in Media.

- i) Tshogofatso Modubu- Director/ Ph.D., University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- ii) Queenter Mbori- HER STANDARDS, The Standard Group PLC, Kenya.
- iii) Lilian Mukoche- Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) FM and Grand Wave Consortium (GWC), Kenya.

## Presentation by panelists.

- i) *Tshogofatso Modubu- Media representation of female candidates who participated in South Africa's 2021 local government elections during the 2021 COVID-19 pandemic.*

Tshogofatso Modubu's presentation focused on the results of a content analysis study that aimed to show how the media portrays women's political candidates in South Africa. Drawing from other studies, her study also revealed that female politicians in Lesotho do not receive equal coverage as their male counterparts and that female politicians have a fear of interacting with journalists and this prohibits journalists from having newsworthy content related to them and their political pursuits.

She also presented that a study in Nigeria also found that women politicians are marginalized as subjects of news but also as sources of news. This limited visibility is normatively problematic because it reinforces a patriarchal understanding of politics and women's political participation. Although women have achieved significant political progress they are still contending with obstacles in time and space because they are traditionally located outside competitive politics. This is evident in the way they are often represented in the media as the powerless and lacking agency. As powerful agents of social change, the news media exercise considerable influence in the construction of public understanding of political issues through their power to mediate societal discourses.

She presented her findings that revealed that the share of voice remained largely unequal, with men being accessed almost four times more at 78% than women who were accessed at a measly 19%. Interestingly, there was a little but significant rise in the voices of those who identify as transgender and/or transsexual with a three percent representation, a major jump from previous findings where their voices would be absent. The disproportion between male and female representation is a consistent trend and has been shown in research around the world repeatedly.

She concluded by recommending the following:

- There's a need for continuous M&E done on gendered voices during elections.
- There's a need for continued research into how black female politicians' voices are heard in the media.
- To ensure that women are given an equal share of voice; the MMA data concludes that there should be enforcement of the SADC Gender and Development Protocol and press code with respect to gender representation
- There's a need to develop a barometer for media representation of female politicians during election periods across the continent.
- There's a need to ensure that there is advocacy for fair media coverage of female politicians.

*ii) Queenter Mbori- Reflections on the August 2022 General Elections in Kenya.*

Queenter Mbori's presentation focused on the reflections on the representation of women in the August 2022 general elections in Kenya emphasizing that the August elections saw a significant increase in the number of women elected to various political seats. Although the political scene in Kenya is male-dominated, she drew on her extensive experience interviewing and working with female politicians at HER STANDARDS to share the challenges that women in politics face, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Inadequate political support.
- Inadequate financial resources.
- Electoral Gender-Based Violence
- Gender stereotyping
- Existing patriarchal structures that judge women on marriage and motherhood status.
- Misuse of affirmative action laws
- Lack of media accountability.

To mitigate these challenges, she posited further the importance of a media that is both responsible and accountable in the coverage of women in politics. She outlined the following actions for better media:

- The media must understand gender roles, inequalities, biases, and stereotypes and work to eliminate negative stereotypes that promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society.
- The selection of sources and stories should reflect the composition of society and promote Gender equality within media organizations.
- The media should uphold gender-sensitive reporting, expose SGBV including online harassment, interrogate and address what impedes gender equality, and offer investigative journalism grants for gender issues. In order for violence to be tackled, it has to be officially recognized and named for what it is, its root causes have to be identified, and it has to be prevented, monitored, denounced, and investigated.
- Media owners, regulators, and stakeholders must develop and apply coherent gender policies.

She concluded with very important information about her work at HER STANDARDS and how she is using the platform to give visibility to a diversified group of female politicians. She further elaborated that it is not just enough for women to contest for political office but that they also win, her work therefore would also be focusing on how to help female politicians in Kenya strategize to win.

*iii) Lillian Mukoche – The Role of Media in Gender Stereotyping during the 2022 General Elections in Kenya.*

Lillian Mukoche presented the results of her studies on the Role of gender stereotyping during the 2022 general elections in Kenya. Her studies focused on interviews with voters and aspirants, where her study asked both groups for their perceptions of media coverage of men vs women. In her presentation, she shared the following insights:

- The Media still has a lot to do in terms of balanced reporting where both genders are given equal coverage/even playgrounds.
- Community/local media platforms have tried in giving fair coverage to all players in politics regardless of their Gender.
- Financial stability is key when joining politics.
- Gender stereotyping contributes to the end result of what a candidate scores in terms of total votes.

She concluded that there was uneven coverage by the news media during the last general election. Men were favored more compared to women. She also found that stereotypes affected news coverage as male politicians in senior positions were favored as compared to female politicians. Further, the audience was more receptive to political news that affected the male candidates as compared to the female candidates, and finally, cultural barriers among media players greatly influenced how news was packaged with regard to gender in the last general election.

In her recommendations, she posited that training needs to be undertaken by media stakeholders on gender-sensitive reporting to achieve unbiased reporting among genders during elections. She also recommended that politicians need to be accorded balanced coverage irrespective of gender and the political office one is vying for. Another recommendation was that audience sensitization be conducted by the media with regard to the importance of political news and information on both genders and finally that training is given to women in politics on how to handle the media during elections.

*iv) Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola- Digital media inclusion and women in politics; The Nigerian experience.*

Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola started by sharing that according to the gender gaps report, the gender gap has been closed by 61% and there's still a long way to go to reach gender parity in political empowerment in Africa. Nigeria ranks globally at 141/146 in terms of closing the gender gap for women in parliament and ministerial positions. She further emphasized that the AU estimates that almost 75% of Africa's population is under 35 and this only emphasizes the need to dismantle the gender and age barriers that exist for women in politics and increase their representation and active participation.

She outlined the role the media plays in addressing the gender gap through the quality and quantity of coverage given to women. The current reality is that this limited coverage limits the role-model effect that more coverage would have and limits the number of women in society who see themselves as leaders, therefore upholding the patriarchal norms in society. She also shed light on how peace and security issues in Nigeria further contribute to how women cannot fully participate in politics in Nigeria.

She then moved to digital inclusion and the use of digital technologies in Nigeria, highlighting the current challenges that exist within the online sphere that encourage bias against women and increase barriers for women in politics. She highlighted an AWiM resource, SOURCEHER! that profiles women experts in many issues including, but not limited to, women in politics.

## **Conclusion**

In line with the theme and methodology of the AWiM22 conference, this panel concluded with the following actionable actions in response to the following topic:

- Online sexual harassment, finance, laws, culture sabotage, and media misrepresentation are all challenges that limit female political participation, the media should be mandated to equitably cover women in addition to media training on gender sensitivities while making their coverage.
- In Morocco and South Sudan, the challenges are that women do not participate in drafting laws due to a lack of education, exacerbated by civil war. Proposed actions are:
  - Promoting and sustaining women's mentorship to ready them for participation in politics in Morocco
  - Institutionalization of gender policies within political parties, schools, and even homes.
  - Countering nepotism and political patronage.
  - Involving and emphasizing the role of civil society in teaching women about their rights.
  - Educating the youth in gender equality discourse.
  - Emphasizing financial independence for women.
  - Encouraging young women to be interested in politics.
  - Including women in mainstream news channels and not just on social media.
  - Implementation of already existing laws and policies on gender equality.
  - Normalization of relationships between men and women in Morocco where men and women in workplaces are often segregated.
- In Nigeria and Zimbabwe, there's low representation of women due to the patriarchal nature of African societies. Some gaps include academic gaps, leadership skills gaps, and gaps in literacy in political language among women, proposed actions include:
  - Research, analysis, and dissemination of critical discourse about women in politics.

# **Promise and perils of digital technologies for women-led political activism in Africa.**



## Abstract

The session stresses the perils women face in the era of digital technologies (DTs). Mainly, the focus has been on the position of women leaders in political activism in Africa, particularly, female activists and journalists who report on social inequalities issues.

Many critical questions and issues were tackled. The first issue is rising women's participation in political activism. The second issue is the marginalization of women's involvement in political affairs and activism. The third point is the male control of digital tech, and the unavailability of those DTs to women, especially, the ones in rural areas. The fourth issue is that there are challenges facing female reporters to get stories from those subjected to violence and inequalities. That is, due to the fear of being subjected to more violence, the female participants are reluctant to share their stories with female reporters and journalists.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator- Maëlle Salzinger, Senior Program Officer, European Centre for Development Policy Management, Netherlands.

- i) Maëlle Salzinger- Senior Program officer, European Centre for Development Policy Management, Netherlands.
- ii) Kiki Mordi – CEO, Document Women, Nigeria.
- iii) Dr Tigist Shewarega Hussen- Researcher, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- iv) Nompumelelo Runji- Project Manager, Charter Project Africa Democracy, South Africa.

## General discussions and contributions by panelists

*Maëlle Salzinger- Promise and Perils of Digital Technologies for Women-led Political Activism in Africa.*

This was a presentation of a recently concluded study by the same panel title. Maëlle Salzinger led the discussion with contributions from the rest of the speakers in relation to their own work. To start, she suggested that digital technology can help women overcome barriers. However, there is no support provided for political activism and gender equality. Also, it has been stated that online political activism is dominated by privileged women. What is more promising, digital platforms are found to be re-producing exclusionary patterns. As a recommendation, regulation in digital technologies should account for the diversity of context and uses as well as call for pressure on Tech companies for upgrading content moderation.

To add to the conversation, Kiki Mordi asserted that digital space puts females on the margin and restrains them from achieving their goals. In tandem, Dr. Tigist Shewarega Hussein pointed out the over-control of digital technologies by males, which makes such cyber-space equality far-fetched. Though there is a rise in hashtag movements in Africa to counter such social inequalities, many cyber-sphere problems emerge throughout such cyber-activism. The latter indicates, further, that there is a shift in the discourse of the public sphere and citizenship.

On the other hand, Nompumelelo second-guessed political participation on digital technologies since representation does not always translate into meaningful participation. Though such hashtags go viral and make some sort of rampancy on digital technologies, women still have no influence on decision-making. Meaningful representation is more than just gender parity, it is the influence that matters. Also, the critical issue is that many women belongings to marginalized ethnic groups still have no access to digital technologies.



To contribute to activism, such aligning suggestions are presented agreeably via the four speakers:

- The need to amplify women's voices and encourage the voiceless ones to speak.
- The need to enhance female agency within African social constructions.
- The need for democratic platforms that will give voice to the voiceless.
- Digital Technologies should be used to strengthen and deepen female political participation.
- Women's rights concerns should be regarded as human rights.
- Urgent call for more social agencies that advocate women's political participation and activism.

## **Conclusion**

In the age of digital technologies, the workshop emphasizes the vulnerabilities that women endure in the digital technologies space. The status of women leaders in political action in Africa has received a lot of attention, especially from female activists and journalists who cover issues of social inequality. Maëlle Salzinger finds that there is no support provided to political activism and gender equality.

Such congruent recommendations are provided amicably by the four speakers to support activism: the necessity of amplifying female voices and inspiring those without voices to speak. Enhancing female agency in African social structures is necessary. democratic platforms are required for the sake of giving the voiceless females voices. To increase and deepen female political engagement, digital technologies should be used.

Concerns about women's rights should be considered human rights. We need more social organizations that support women's activism and political participation.

# Collective action and representation of women in media.



## Abstract

This panel discussed the ideological, legal, economical, and professional challenges facing media development in Africa today. The speakers explored the different forms of collective action, their challenges, outcomes, and opportunities within the media community.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator: Fatima Zahra Elmasaoudi- Ph.D. student- University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah Faculty of Letters, Morocco.

- i) Dr. Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle- Lecturer, Lagos State University, Nigeria.
- ii) Dr. Anne Odoh- Lecturer/Design and New Media, School of Media and Communication, Pan Atlantic University, Nigeria.
- iii) Dr. Christina Chan-Meetoo- Senior Lecturer, University of Mauritius, Mauritius.
- iv) Yvonne Phiri- Doctoral student, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.
- v) Nyarai Sabeka- Part-time lecturer and co-founder, Zimbabwe Open University and SheShines Africa, Zimbabwe.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle- Near Nests: How Workplace Crèches improve the Status of Women Broadcast Journalists in Nigeria.*

Dr. Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle started the presentation by highlighting that most times the status of women in media is looked upon as the population and there is this belief that there are more women in broadcasting journalism than in print journalism probably because they come on air a lot. This is actually not true especially when it comes to broadcast production. There aren't more women in broadcast journalism and because the fact that we have a few coming on air to read news or anchor programs, does not really mean that the status of women in broadcast journalism is higher or better than that of print media.

The research findings show that women holding management and executive editorial positions in broadcast journalism are either young women who are not married or do not have small children or they are older women whose children are already grown so they do not demand their time and attention. For women who have young children and are able to grow and get management and editorial positions are actually lucky in the sense that they have their mothers, mothers-in-law, younger sisters or nephews living with them and helping them take care of the kids and this allows them to focus on their work.

When it comes to maternity leave policies, most women complain that it is not adequate. The maximum period for maternity leave in both government and private institutions is 4 months while some government establishments offer 4 months which included two weeks that are issued before the leave. The government is now trying to give 6 months for the first two children since most women complain that they are supposed to resume work when their children are still very young. That's why most of them end up resigning from their duties.

From a study they did about the status of women in media in terms of managing children and work balance, Dr. Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle says that they found out that women face the dilemma where they want to be treated the same way as men, with the same salary and equal opportunities without actually discussing the fact that they need some leverage when it comes to child care and it is like being caught on two sides of a sword where they want to be treated just like men but at the same time, they have management turning a blind eye in popularity of women broadcasters with children. From the findings, it is also clear that organizations rely a lot more on equality policies in helping to retain women in broadcasting rather than look at ways in which they can show compassion and understanding and help women in the industry to be able to still be in the industry while they are able to care for their children.

Dr. Ganiyat Tijani-Adenle said that researchers do not look at the angle of collaborating with media organizations and enlightening them on what they can do because they are not against women journalists but just want their organizations to work and some of them would be very open to initiating things and ideas that will actually help them to retain the very brilliant ladies that work with them in the industry. So, researchers lose out on opportunities to actually advocate and encourage this.

A qualitative study on two broadcast organizations in Lagos state was carried. One is a private television station organization that currently has a crèche within its establishment and the other is the state radio station organization that used to have a crèche like two decades ago but no longer have it. Both male and female journalists and management from the private TV station that has a creche were interviewed. From the state radio station, they interviewed males and females who ever used the creche at the time it was there, and also females who are working in that radio station and currently are nursing babies when the creche is no longer there. These were the findings of the study:

- Female journalists use the crèche in the organization only when they do not have an alternative. Those who have their relatives or maids would rather have them take care of the baby at home instead of bringing them to the workplace crèche which is more convenient for them because they also help with house chores.
- Having a workplace crèche without having a policy and understanding of the critical role it is supposed to play cannot sustain the crèche.
- The women who used to crèche are those with cars. To help them carry the baby plus other items like changing clothes.
- Due to the quality of care that was given at the creche, most men started telling their wives to bring the children to the creche which improved their relationship with their children.

She concluded by saying women media organizations and feminist researchers need to begin looking at what they can do to retain women in media instead of doing research on their status and the things that push them out.

There is a need to celebrate organizations that are investing and sacrificing money to retain female journalists and also motivate other organizations to emulate them so that it is not something that works for just media organizations but a policy that can be promoted to all organizations as well. Creches need to be operated all through to be able to accommodate even the female journalists who work at night. They should not operate from 9 -5.

*ii) Dr. Anne Odoh- Gender inequalities in the Media: Challenges and Prospects for female journalists in Nigeria.*

Dr Anne Odoh began by mentioning that she had carried out a study in Nigeria on gender inequalities. The 21st-century media industry is traditionally dominated by men. They are in the newsroom and leadership roles so it is a gendered career and this term is very popular, gentlemen of the press. Women are in the media but reporting feminine topics like fashion, health, fitness, food, and stuff like that, and with digital technology interestingly, more women are being represented in the media both with online and content creation. This has given almost a level plain platform field whereby rears to entry have been reduced and everyone can get in now.

The findings were that in the highly visible newsrooms; politics, sports, diaspora reporting, and energy finance, it is still the men who are dominating those areas, especially in leadership roles. This is because of strong patriarchal structures. These are the things causing gender discrimination in a gendered country. So, in Nigeria and most of Africa, patriarchal structures are affecting the repatriation of women, not just in media but in practically every sector.

Another finding was that in the highly visible newsrooms; politics, sports, diaspora reporting, and energy finance, it is still the men who are dominating those areas, especially in leadership roles. Again, this is due to strong patriarchal structures and has led to gender discrimination in gendered countries like Nigeria and most of Africa. Patriarchal structures are affecting the repatriation of women, not just in media but in practically every sector.

Another study was also carried out to understand the experiences of female journalists in the Nigerian media industry and how female journalists can advance their careers in the Nigerian media industry. She used critical realism. Which says that knowledge of the world comes from the interaction with the social world and within the cultural setting. In African society, the major institutions underpinning our experiences are the patriarchal structures. Three key findings came out of this study. They include:

- Women journalists in Nigeria experience different types of gender bias discrimination in news gathering and production.
- Women are stereotyped for communal traits of compassion, affection, friendliness, and altruism which makes them more empathetic than men in news reporting. This conflicts with their role assignments especially when they are reporting on very emotional issues, they find a way of coping with this by taking up time to cool off and deal with issues peaked with therapies, joining a support group of women who are in similar situations to prevent these vulnerabilities from make them feel insecure or unprofessional.
- Women have realized that they needed to reskill themselves, be ready for tough assignments, be visible, be deliberate and assertive, and let management know what they are capable of doing to intentionally seek opportunities.

To conclude, she mentioned some of the actions the women have taken to be able to deal with the challenges of discrimination barriers, and stereotypes. They include:

- They share their emotional challenges with someone to be able to move on from the things on the job that is affecting them and their performance.
- They have learned to be deliberate and assertive in letting their superiors know what they are capable of doing by reaching out for those tough assignments and doing them very effectively.
- They realized that they need to engage in self-development by not shying away from tough assignments to enable them to learn from those who have gone ahead, mentors, role models, and people who are breaking barriers and who rise to become leaders.

Some of the recommendations that she came up with include:

- To have more women mentors in senior positions who will mentor others, bring them in and show them how to climb the career ladder and how to progress in this gendered career. This will make more women work in key positions roles, and make key decisions that will positively impact women in the industry.
- Talk more about the issues of inequality by amplifying voices using forums like these conferences, symposiums, and the like because the more we talk about it, the more the industry regulators and other stakeholders know that this is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Media organizations to develop and implement egalitarian policies and frameworks that would support both skilled men and women in this industry to progress and work towards achieving the UN's 2030 SDP goals which address the dominant narrative of inequalities both in Nigeria and Africa's media industry.
- Equality - Provide a role for everyone in the community that fits them. if one qualifies for a role, they should be able to get it regardless of whether they are men or woman.
- Diversity - have different strengths and different roles that people can work in, in the industry.
- Belonging - work in a role that is accepted by everyone without being afraid that people will perceive us differently.

*iii) Christina Chan-Meetoo- The current status of the representation of women in the Mauritian media, with a special focus on the visibility of women of African descent.*

Christina Chan-Meetoo reported that she had carried out a study that was published in 2020 that focused on the presence of women in Mauritian media hierarchy and in media content. Some of the findings of this study showed that despite a growing feminization of the workforce in the media, there was a persistent glass ceiling and sticky floor effects with very few news executives and very few women owning media structures. They are virtually absent from ownership. They are just a very small minority in top positions in management and in terms of content. After analyzing more than 600 articles, there was major invisibility for women as sources not only as ordinary sources but also as expert sources which made them invisible, underrepresented, and misrepresented.

She also carried out a study that focused on the only women's magazine in the island. She also analyzed the news bulletins of national public television and the online video buildings of the leading private media. She did the online video because there is no local private television in Mauritius. There is only public television, unfortunately, the space has not been completely liberalized although on paper it is supposed to be free.

The magazine is described as 'The space for the voices of Mauritian women', meaning all Mauritian women, and is also described as 'The reflection of the woman fighter and warrior in a constantly evolving society.' This is a major in rhetoric, and in the positioning, it is quite strong in terms of empowerment of women and all women of diversity in inclusion.

From the cover magazines, she was able to answer the question 'How women are depicted.' From the findings, 66% of the time the women who were on the covers of the magazine were portrayed as being sensual, and sexy, including pregnant women. There were only two pregnant women on the cover which is a positive thing altogether but both of them were systematically portrayed in a sensual bold, with lips partially parted and the body partly covered as if it is enticing for the male gaze.

Another finding was the representation of skin color. There was a heavy skew toward the fair. There were medium-brown women but the vast majority were fair skin and also a couple of blonde women were featured although the blonde fender type is very rare in the local population.

The hair overall tended to be the relatively natural dark colour which is a positive thing altogether but the hair type that was showcased was mostly either straight or wavy and never ever could we see on the cover of the magazine a woman with coily, kinky hair, so nappy haired, so natural hair that would belong to women who have African ancestry. The Creole women were completely erased.

In terms of body type, most of them were quite thin. 73% of the women on the covers were either light brown or white-skinned women. Only one woman had darker brown skin not completely dark brown but darker brown in comparison with the average woman that was being showcased on the cover of the magazine. So, this poses the question, "Where are the Creole women with darker skin?", "do they simply not exist for women's magazines?"

Another finding was on the news bulletin on national public television. In the main news bulletin, over a span of one month which is equivalent to 30 news bulletins, only one appearance for a Creole woman. In the secondary news bulletin broadcast in the Creole language, they had only two appearances for Creole women. However, a positive and encouraging thing is that both the times that the women were featured, there was no sexualization and they were featured with natural coy hair. So, there is some effort that was done for inclusivity.

When it comes to the online video news bulletins which were produced by the leading commercial media in Mauritius, within a span of one month, there were 14 appearances for 3 different Creole women of whom one has nappy hair and dark brown skin.

In conclusion, she said that there is a Nexus between socioeconomic status and ethnicity in the representation of women, especially in a country that is as diverse as Mauritius, a tiny island but very diverse. The women's magazine which claims to be the voice for all women and for women's empowerment is more like a bourgeois commercial media that participate in the marketing of mainstream Eurocentric representation and in fact, it does do the promotion of cosmetics a lot which tends to come from European brands and more especially French brands. Conversely, national public television and leading private media, tend to appeal more to the masses. They are more in the popular segment of the media and they, therefore, have had this necessity of appealing to more people and making sure that they have diverse and inclusive representation of women on their newscasting.

*iv) Yvonne Phiri and Nyarai Sabeka- Media as an empowerment tool for rural women in Zimbabwe.*

Yvonne Phiri and Nyarai Sabeka started their presentation by saying that in Zimbabwe there is a tendency for the underrepresentation of women, especially in issues that are gender sensitive. It reflects that there are inequalities that are in society as men are still deemed as the better sources when it comes to news in the course that he is understood or believed to be of more complex issues.

Some of the factors that lead to gender imbalance are:

- As noted, the Beijing platform declaration, highlighted that gender stereotypes and limited women in decision-making play a major role in challenges impacting the equality of men and women.
- In Africa, underrepresentation, and misrepresentation of women are intensified further by patriarchal traditions, religious beliefs, and social customs.
- Of recent in the year 2022 in Zimbabwe, religious beliefs are a serious impingement on the representation of women. There is a growing call into concern on how religion keeps suppressing women being represented regarding issues that affect them.

Tapfumaneyi and Rupande conducted research in Zimbabwe and noted that women continue to suffer unfair and abusive portrayals in the media. Almost all the media portray women as weak or women as people who cannot articulate complex issues. In the local media, women are more pushed to as sources of soft issues like to do with fashion and lifestyle but when it comes to complex issues it seems that women are left out. They are believed not to understand such complex issues but in actual faith, women are the ones that are affected daily by the economic situations.

The UNDP in 2021, noted that positive representation of women in media enhances their resilience in hardships which include pandemics and natural disasters.

Yvonne Phiri, the co-presenter mentioned that in a study that they carried out, they used the feminist media theory which states that if women-controlled media production, content would be different and better, and the empowerment feminist theory which emphasizes the participation of locals to achieve empowerment. The basic underlying assumption of this feminist theory is that women are equally capable of performing any social role as their male counterparts and they need to end sexism by empowering women.

In Zimbabwe, there are still patriarchal tendencies whereby women are supposed to remain at home and be mothers and do nothing else while their male counterparts are the owners of media industries.

These theories put emphasis on the need to do away with certain attitudes that are there in the industry whereby women are turned into objects when it comes to advertising instead of them being given the power to lead. At the end of the day, society is still aligned with patriarchal tendencies.

According to the Ministry of Women Affairs, community and small enterprise development in Zimbabwe, women constitute 52% of the population with about 70% living in rural areas. Only 24% of persons heard, seen, or read about in the media are women. The underrepresentation of women reinforces stereotypes and the continued marginalization of women as both news sources and news subjects.

An increased representation of women in media will ensure support of resilience and adaptive capacities of women in issues like climate change, and gender-based violence and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Most women lack the confidence to use modern media tools such as social media platforms, and computers due to lack of knowledge hence they are not vocal when it comes to issues relating to their empowerment. ICT has the potential to give women access to tools that can make their jobs easier, and their contributions more widely and fully felt.

In conclusion, the two presenters came up with the following recommendations:

- A need to establish community media set up by female professional journalists in rural areas which promote the development and education needs of women.
- Initiate media literacy education, especially regarding 21st-century media technology with an aim to increase the participation of rural women as both news sources and news subjects.
- Dissemination of information in local vernacular language and increase funding to promote inclusive digital participation of women.

## **Conclusion**

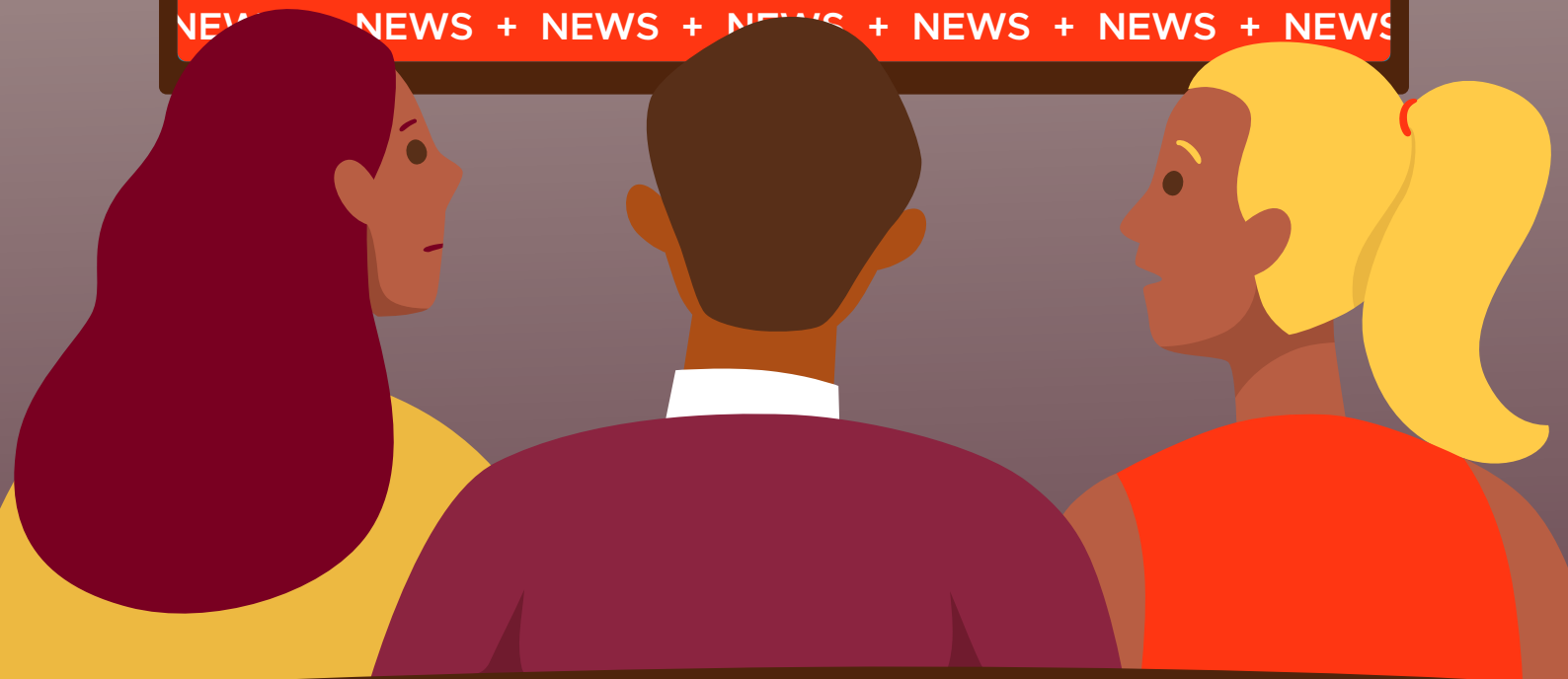
The speakers were in consensus that having more exchange programs and increasing the participation of women in collective action regarding was paramount. They posited that an exchange program would help people to share models that they are implementing and these could be adapted to fit a community or organization. This in turn would promote the objectives of collective action.

The recommendations forwarded are listed in summary as follows:

- There is a need to establish community media set up by female professional journalists in rural areas which promote the development and education needs of women.
- Initiate media literacy education, especially regarding 21st-century media technology with an aim to increase the participation of rural women as both news sources and news subjects.
- Dissemination of information in local vernacular language and increase funding to promote inclusive digital participation of women.
- To have more women mentors in senior positions who will mentor others, bring them in and show them how to climb the carrier ladder and how to progress in this gendered career. This will make more women work in key positions roles, and make key decisions that will positively impact women in the industry.
- Talk more about the issues of inequality by amplifying voices using forums like these conferences, symposiums, and the like because the more we talk about it, the more the industry regulators and other stakeholders know that this is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Media organizations to develop and implement egalitarian policies and frameworks that would support both skilled men and women in this industry to progress and work towards achieving the UN's 2030 SDP goals which address the dominant narrative of inequalities both in Nigeria and Africa's media industry.
- Equality - Provide a role for everyone in the community that fits them. if one qualifies for a role, they should be able to get it regardless of whether they are men or woman.
- Diversity - have different strengths and different roles that people can work in, in the industry.
- Belonging - work in a role that is accepted by everyone without being afraid that people will perceive us differently.



# Representation and Visual cultures.



## Abstract

This panel discussed the evolution of representations of women in TV; from films to series and music videos. The speakers will explore how these representations of women can create stereotypes about women and their role in society.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator: Professor Fatima Sadiqi- President, ISIS Center for Women and Development, Morocco.

- i) Dr. Sherin Moody- Lecturer, The British University in Egypt (BUE), Egypt.
- ii) Darlington Amorighoye- Lecturer/ Ph.D., University of Malaya, Malaysia.
- iii) Dr M'Hand Boukoutis- Researcher, Morocco.
- iv) Dr. Raheemat Adeniran- Lecturer, Lagos State University, Nigeria.
- v) Tania Machonisse- Lecturer, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique.
- vi) Dr. Dina Farouk Abou Zeid- Head, Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, Egypt.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr. Sherin Moody- The Representation of African Women on Netflix.*

Dr Sherin Moody traced the evolution of African women's representation from helpers, aggressive, angry and seductive women to more powerful and transformative lead roles. She attributed this to the emergence of the fourth screen. The emergence of platforms like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime altered how television shows are consumed and who produces them. According to a 2019 Netflix assessment, Netflix's content is more diversified than that of the industry. Between 2018 and 2019, 36% of all Netflix leads were from underrepresented groups, compared to 28% in the top 100 highest-grossing theatrical films. She noted that online platforms like Netflix have 52 % of their content feature women.

She went on to say that with the help of platforms like Netflix, Black women, and Black millennials have influenced social change. Mammies, Sapphires, and Jezebels changed to Black Ladies, Mistresses, and Matriarchs. These new roles saw Black women on both sides of the screen, thriving, breaking down barriers, and taking charge of their images and voices. The modified representation and stereotypes of African women were related to the rise of media ownership and creative control attained by Black women.

- ii) *Darlington Amorighoye- Beyond Namaste: "Indian women in Nigeria", representations and negotiating modernity through televisual text in soap operas.*

Darlington Amorighoye's presentation aimed to share his research on the topic above, particularly answering how women in Nigeria negotiate reality from Indian soap operas and how they interpret modernity from the cultural text they consume by examining content on Zee world, a popular channel for Indian soap operas. He summarized that although globalization is made possible by the penetrating effects of television content, this content plays a large role in representing gender stereotypes and in interpretations of women and men.

He concluded that soap operas are used as "soft power" in the global South as the culture diffuses from screen to reality. He went on to say those soap operas also influence audience perception through the cultural intercommunication and reproduction values that are taking place on the screen. He particularly emphasized the effects of this content on Nigerian women and concluded that they were not all positive.

*iii) Tania Machonisse- The visual culture of popular music in Mozambique: The visibility and visibility of women in the music video clips.*

Tania Machonisse's presentation offered some reflections on the over-sexualization and objectification of females in videos in comparison to males. She called out that any critical analysis of (audio)visual media cultures must involve social institutions, collective media actors, political and economic agents, and the social movements that produce and disseminate (audio)visuals. In her content analysis, she found that videos consistently revealed a proliferation of stereotypical gender roles, particularly as these pertained to negative images of women and women as sex objects. Many of the studies also found that males, compared to females, were more likely to be aggressors as well as victims of violence.

In Mozambique, she noted that studies regarding visual culture were almost nonexistent. Usually, she added, the representation of men is related to the oppressive relationship and power dynamics that configure women as submissive to the patriarchal society. She noted the subjectivity of visual content and as such put forth reflection questions for the audience as conclusions. She asked for more studies that focus on the representation of women in the media and in the music industry in particular.

She asked the audience to reflect on the difference between professionalism and hyper-sensuality of female artists and to what degree the presence of female dancers in male video clips means exploitation of female bodies. Both male and female artists need to sell their songs and gain fame. Why the burden of fame on women is valued as self-objectification?

*iv) Dr. Dina Farouq Abou Zeid- The Image of Women in Egyptian Songs' Video Clips.*

Dr Dina Farouq Abou Zeid began by stating that women in music clips in Egypt project a stereotypical image that is farfetched from reality and can be misinterpreted and misrepresented. She noted that the use of women as background objects in video clips promoted discrimination and biases in beauty standards, age, and the role of women in life. She continued that females in video clips portray women only as romantic partners or adjacent to men and thus further promoting the stereotypes about women's roles. Women in visual imagery are also portrayed in ways that promote violence against them, the messaging promoted is usually damaging to women

All in all, she contrasted this with the positive ways visual imagery can be used to shed light on women's issues but warned that though this was a step in the right direction, the frequency was still low. She noted challenges that exist to increase positive visual imagery that include but are not limited to traditions, global culture, men's political position, little to no awareness about women's rights, men's perception of female empowerment, and the profit motivations of media organizations.

*v) Dr. Raheemat Adeniran- Youth Perception of Men's Changing Role in Advertising: A Study of Glo Tatashe Daddy Advert.*

Dr Raheemat Adeniran presented the changing portrayal of men and women in TV commercials in Nigeria. She examined youth perceptions and attitudes towards male-dominant characters in the specific "Glo Tatashe Daddy" advert. The findings revealed that the audience was respectful to watching adverts that challenged stereotypical gender portrayal and the majority of the female respondents found the advert to be a true representation of modern-day Nigeria. The male respondents also agreed with the sentiment.

She concluded that changing gender portrayals are commendable but should reflect societal norms and expectations. Further, the positive perception and attitude among respondents should serve as inspiration for content writers and gender activists. She also noted that the findings suggested a biased reception of controversial male representation versus female representation in TV commercials and as such, called for wider studies to be conducted on this topic.

vi) *Dr. M'hand Boukoutis - To discriminate against women in the media, a reading of the decisions of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication.*

Dr M'hand Boukoutis began by mentioning that discrimination based on gender is a part of the violence that women and girls face every day in Africa and North Africa. He noted that the image in media institutions and organizations of women has been fought by the law in Morocco by the High Commission and Communication Authority (HACA) and the other laws that have been approved by parliament. He advocated for the urgent need to put forward laws that prevent and punish derogatory comments about women in visual imagery.

# Workshop: Women, Journalists and Media entrepreneurs: Global challenges and solutions.



## Abstract

This panel features journalists and media owners who will unpack the global challenges within media business entrepreneurship and reporting broadly, and at the end provide some working solutions and/or recommendations. The contents of the discussion will be relayed for final contribution to a formal publication. The panel objectives were to discuss challenges in media entrepreneurship: limited funding opportunities, gender inequalities, cultural biases, state surveillance, limited freedom of expression, and freedom of the press within some governance systems.

## Speakers and moderator

Session Moderator- Bongiwe Tutu- Project Coordinator, Africa-China Reporting Project, South Africa

- i) Sophie Mokoena- Senior Foreign Editor, at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), South Africa.
- ii) Tsedale Lemma- Founder and Editor-in-Chief at Addis Standard Online Magazine, Ethiopia.
- iii) Paula Fray- Founder of Frayintermedia and CEO of Fray College, South Africa.
- iv) Annonciata Byukusenge- Chief Editor at Rwanda News 24, Rwanda.
- v) Melody Chikono- Projects Editor at Alpha Media Holdings, Zimbabwe.
- vi) Khondwani Banda- Editor-in-Chief at The Mainstream, Zambia.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Sophie Mokoena - The journalistic practice from the newsroom to the public.*

Sophie Mokoena started by narrating her journey and local experience as a journalist and as a news reporter. She also explained that there must be a strong professional relationship between the journalist and the editor. One must consider dealing with them with respect whether they are senior or junior reporters because they also have their personal issues. Show your journalist that you will support them as long as they do what is right. Also, there must be trust between the editor and the journalist.

The other important issue about the state and the media is that there must be professionalism and respect. The public must be given room to participate in helping to know what is happening on the ground.

She also talked about the issue of online bullying and said that it is a challenge. Those who know how to handle it should be able to assist to ensure that the situation is managed. Some of the solutions for this challenge are:

- Constant training
- Sharing of information
- Mental endorsing those that need help
- Belonging to groups that need journalists.

With such kind of interaction, people can learn from one another and even start up what can be depended upon even in the future.

- ii) *Tsedale Lemma- Journalistic practice from the newsroom to the public.*

Tsedale Lemma started by saying that she has been around in the media for 20 years and only 1 year in the new room for publishing. She talked about her experience in the newsroom before she left and said that most people want independent journalists. She said that making the media independent is still an issue in Ethiopia but the media is in a good percentage governed by the state and therefore they don't face the challenges that the independent media would go through. Another thing that she mentioned was there is no security for the independent media since it is confined to the major city, Addis Ababa even though the population of the country is over 12 million people. There are a few that are controlled by the state. So, the challenge is collecting news from independent media.

As news editors, they ensured that they got a framework that can control so that the many challenges that journalists face are basically addressed. She emphasized that the editors have a responsibility to have such a framework that is governed by the media owners. This will ensure that the trust between the journalists and the editors is governed. The framework should outline the expectations that they have but not so much that will overwhelm the journalist. In an environment where the media is constantly being monitored by the reader, it takes into account the responsibility of both the editor and the journalist. The same applies to the government, the media, and the state.

The expectation of journalists as they are dealing with such environments is they expect the media owners to come up and find out how to make this happen so that the journalists can have it easy to call the political bodies to get information. The media leaders must be sure to make this happen. The framework must govern the relationship. The leadership must lead the journalist so that the media can become the fourth state of any country as we have been taught.

One of the major concerns is that the funding is left for the media itself which is making the work even more difficult. In some countries, it is actually possible since they use the advertisement to make things happen but this is not the case in the Ethiopian media because the people that you expect to give you the advertisement opportunities are already scared of having a connection with you since the state has a long arm to reach to the advertisers to let them terminate the contract with the media house. Therefore, there is no source of income at all. The limited funding comes down to the whole media house hence they are not able to take care of their human resource needs. This makes the media houses live in constant fear because they cannot access funding and also, and they are constantly audited.

Another major concern is the coming up of YouTubers that have literally owned the payroll of the government. So, as you keep When journalists are minting their work ethics, confirming the truth of the matter, YouTubers don't check anything. They end up swapping the journalists throwing down their presence. So as a journalist you really struggle to be on the top because you are still expected to get the truth, therefore you cannot compete with the new media which is more of a hit-and-run kind of job when yourself is in the legacy media.

The recommendations that were made for the above concerns were:

- The legacy media should stay on course because nothing replaces truth and quality
- Create a space to create more income through funding and partnering with other developed media houses.
- Use the business model of media leadership
- Look for the availability of the market in the country

### *iii) Paula Fray – The future of journalistic education.*

Paula Fray began her presentation by saying that she has been an editor since 1999 (more than 20 years). This has not been easy for her since the first time she was employed as a newspaper editor, she was the only female editor. Going up the ladder of leadership as a female has not been easy for her since new levels come up with new challenges. She narrated that it is a lonely journey. One of the experiences that she encountered is that Leadership and audience have come up with new demands as some do not appreciate the local magazines and therefore it is like competing with a platform that is not really fair.

She believes that as media, they should serve society and the business of media is a state affair since if you do not have the business models for your media, you will not go far.

Some of the challenges that she spoke about include:

- Technology is a threat and an opportunity as well. People no longer yearn for media stories and their originality because the new media has taken over.
- Post-pandemic problems have led to the drastic need for authentic information.
- People especially the young consume information from social media.

To mitigate these challenges the following actions, have to be taken:

- Be where the audience is. For example, TikTok which is the most recent social media platform has been used for news and advertisements since most people use it. Hence major news outlets use it to reach out to the audience.
- Large media houses and upcoming journalists use social media and individual competitors to reach out to their audience.
- The business media to tap opportunities strongly to still attract their audience.
- The need to understand the management of the media to make a profit.

She also narrated how they have managed to reach out to marginalized groups like women and trained them on technology and innovations and after the training, the women reported having a better understanding of innovations. They also wanted to be innovative in their storytelling and to learn how to manage the human resources in the newsroom. A survey was carried out on whether the women would consider starting their own media companies and 75 % of them wanted to do so with 10 who already have started their own media house.

She concluded by saying that women have a high level of decision-making. They tell stories based on the instruction given to them mostly by men. Hence there is a need for diversity of voices and reporting. There is a need to put women in the management of the media and in policy-making positions.

*iv) Annonciata Byukusenge- Challenges faced by women in the local media.*

Annonciata Byukusenge began by talking about the challenges women face in the media in Rwanda. She highlighted the following major challenges:

- Sexual harassment
- Low salaries
- Lack of skills
- There is no policy that guides gender equity in membership/leadership in the association.

She came up with some recommendations which include:

- Having policies in media houses to control membership.
- Need to raise awareness of the women to handle the problems that they face in the newsrooms like the low capacity of reporting.
- Secondary schools should train people to respect journalists and supporting staff in the newsrooms and help people understand that each person is important.

One of the members of the audience who is the chairperson for women media owners for change in Rwanda added that they have measures put to deal with sexual harassment and discrimination in women in Rwanda which include:

- They have printed templates for media houses about sexual harassment and discrimination
- There is a gender desk to report any incidence since some women are afraid of talking about it openly.
- Having psychological support for victims.
- Provision of safe spaces for women to give their testimonies about the happenings in the media houses.

*v) Melody Chikono- The global dynamics of media development.*

Melody Chikono began by saying that the global dynamics of media development have posed many threats. Journalism has remained the centre of the media business. According to traditional media revenue, the media make use of the models that they use for revenue generation. This has affected the print media because people no longer use printed magazines due to their online presence. Traditional media is being challenged by the new media. This has brought challenges like:

- Lack of funding
- Low revenue since people no longer buy newspapers
- Low advertising since most of it is done by the state



Such challenges have resulted in the media houses struggling to own the news. Before the news is printed, it is already on YouTube. In Zimbabwe, the media only works in the urban states. It is not easy to do media business in Zimbabwe. Citizen journalism is going far hence affecting the local media houses.

In view of the above, media houses have come up with new ways of making revenue through online advertisement. There is competition with ordinary citizens to get news. So, journalism is not dead but it is broadening up to meet the new demand.

She further stated that Zimbabwe has always been seen to be having challenges in terms of leadership. Very few women are in the ownership of the media business. Women are not given room to make decisions. A good number of women journalists have gone through sexual harassment but only one out of five of such women report about the same.

Some of the recommendations that she came up with concerning the above challenges include:

- Need for innovation to train members.
- Need to widen the reach of the media house to reach the locals.
- All organizations to come up with strategies and frameworks that can help to protect women.
- Men should also be trained to understand the value of women.
- There should be a collaboration of the media houses with the state to give women more protection.
- Sexual harassment should be criminalized.

## **Conclusion**

The forum ended with different groups going into the round table discussions to discuss the following topics:

- How technology can be used to enhance the future of the media. Focusing on the major concerns like the ability to work using technology like mobile journalism, the ability to write news for different platforms and again through audience analysis, and how you keep them on board as they read.
- One of the innovative ways to enhance the field of media is to create a website as a model.

All the recommendations made are listed in summary as follows:

- There is a need for innovation to train members and a wider reach of media houses to reach the locals.
- All organizations must come up with strategies and frameworks that can help to protect women.
- There should be a collaboration of the media houses with the state to give women more protection from sexual harassment.
- There is a need to raise awareness of the women to handle the problems that they face in the newsrooms like the low capacity of reporting.
- Secondary schools should train people to respect journalists and supporting staff in the newsrooms and help people understand that each person is important.
- The legacy media should stay on course because nothing replaces truth and quality
- Media organizations must create opportunities for income through funding and partnering with other developed media houses.

# Gender and Journalism education.



## Abstract

This session focused on the role of education and journalism in raising awareness about gender inequalities. Some presenters spoke about their experiences as members of certain gender clubs that can be beneficial in raising awareness about gender equality and helping people (especially girls) to develop confidence and speak out. The session, also, focused on certain challenges and policy issues as far as gender in higher education is concerned. Other presenters spoke about the role of education in highlighting gender issues and encouraging taking initiative and actions to fight against all kinds of gender inequalities.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderators:

Fatima Zehra El Massoudi- Ph.D., University Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah Faculty of Letters, Morocco, and Tirsit Yetbarek-

- i) Mulu Zelalem- Student, Bahirdar University, Ethiopia.
- ii) Asmae Nachit- Student, The Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Dhar El Mahraz Fes Morocco.
- iii) Yassine Azzoui- Student, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Dhar El Mahraz Fes Morocco
- iv) Felix Hirwa- Student, Pax-press Rwanda
- v) Furaha Charlene- Student, Mount Kenya University of Rwanda

## Presentation by panelists

- i) Mulu Zelalem- Challenges, opportunities, and policy issues of gender in higher education institutions of Ethiopia.*

Mulu Zelalem's presentation focused on the challenges female students face in higher education in the context of her country (Ethiopia). She stated that higher education institutions are expected to provide a hospitable working environment for students. However, gender inequality remained a hurdle to achieving the former objective. Thus, education inequality is a major issue in Ethiopia. She, also, elaborated on how some challenges that female students are still facing, lead them to drop out before getting their degree, mainly harassment (At Bahir Dar University, 35 percent of female respondents were victims of sexual harassment in Ethiopia), gender stereotypes, for example how girls are perceived to perform less well, and the underrepresentation of female is a key issue that needs to be highlighted as far as the Ethiopian context is concerned.

She, then, talked about some opportunities for Ethiopian female students in higher education, such as tutoring assistance to increase achievement, scholarship programs, and tutorial support programs. She, also, tackled some policy issues on gender equality in education. For instance, policies began to consider the need to address gender inequality and the decisive phase of reform and expansion that higher education in Ethiopia is going through.

- ii) Asmae Nachit and Yassine Azzoui- Gender and education*

Asmae Nachit discussed how men and women are deemed differently by society. She explained how stereotypes can impact students' education experience, particularly girls. In the first part of her presentation, she invoked the meaning of gender and gave examples of some of these stereotypes. Then, she moved on into addressing one of the major problems that exist in the Moroccan educational system; gender inequality, depending on a chart, extracted from a data provided by the High Commissioner for Planning (HCP) in 2020 that illustrate the disparities between the number of male and female students in rural areas. Finally, she went over some of the factors behind the increase of gender inequity in education in Morocco. Among these are the following: poverty, discrimination, child marriage, and illiteracy.

Yassine Azzioui discussed the construction of gender from the perspective of socialization theory. He discusses how gender is acquired through socialization and the process of interaction, which get students conditioned to behave in a certain way that is in conformity with what society expects from them. He then moved to list the various areas in which gender is constructed such as (Home, School, and media). To elaborate on this, he focused on examples from textbooks and media. First, he explained how textbooks, which are the core learning medium composed of themes, texts, and/or images, become a vehicle for norms, values, and models of gendered social behavior. Textbooks are therefore a tool for both education and social change. To support his claim, he invoked examples of illustrations, topics, and language used in Moroccan textbooks. Yassine indicated that these textbooks are either silent about gender issues or they include items that reproduce the same stereotypical images of both men and women.

Second, he reiterated the catalyst role of media platforms in the construction and dissemination of traditional gender roles through ads and TV shows. This section was concluded by echoing the responsibility of educational institutions such as universities for dismantling gendered discourses and raising awareness about gender issues. As a follow-up, Yassine showed a case of how gender studies courses and programs at the faculty of letters and human sciences in Dhar El Mahraz, help change perspectives and develop critical thinking about gender issues. He ended by speaking about the outcomes of his experience and how it helped him understand gender issues and develop his own perspective.

*iii) Charlene Furaha and Felix Hirwa- The role of Gender clubs in promoting gender equity in institutions of higher learning.*

Charlene Furaha and Felix Hirwa's presentation generally discussed the use and benefits that gender clubs have in the university as well as the community in Rwanda. The presentation started with a brief overview in which the concept of gender is explained and deconstructed by Charlene. Then, she moved directly to define the gender club as a part of the school's extracurricular activities by which both girls and boys are included voluntarily and get life/societal skills development training facilitated by a trained coordinator.

The presenters gave some insights into the benefits of gender clubs for students. For example, how Gender Clubs have a good track record in increasing participants' knowledge, particularly of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and girls' legal rights, as a review by the Gender and Adolescence. As well as the way School-based clubs have the potential to contribute to academic attainment, exposure to new ideas, develop our critical thinking and increase aspirations through providing some surveys.

They also elaborated on the way gender club members are trained in the case of Rwanda by stating that they use the knowledge they get from the training they have conducted in different provinces of Rwanda and teach others what they learned. "We have been trained to become advocates of positive change and be the voice for the voiceless. Now, using the method of "Let them learn through ME ", they said.

Therefore, A significant number of scholars have gained an understanding of gender, especially the place it occupies in Rwandan society and schools as well. Through their different activities, the percentage numbers decrease from 65% to 50% - which is a good outcome. These activities are done in multiple ways:

- School debates- These shape their knowledge and their critical thinking on the issue.
- Magazine & blogs where they can write their stories.
- Radio- Going on Air and addressing gender issues.
- Visit places- To get people's opinions on gender.
- Short films that focus on edutainment.

Of course, the presenters did not restrict only to these benefits, but they also mentioned a number of other benefits, such as Social Networking, and working synergistically with men in making a change in women's gender inequality.

## **Conclusion**

In their concluding remarks, the panelists provided some recommendations to fight the issue of gender inequality. For example, providing an effective gender policy implementation system, and improving the sustainability of women's empowerment projects. Other presenters recommend to, gain insights into the field of gender studies, being able to question what is taken for granted, adopting a critical approach to societal issues related to gender, and developing our own perspective on gender. Therefore, a developed world is not the result of a path travelled by only men but also women.

# **Safety of women in media: online and offline sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in media.**



## Abstract

This panel will examine the various ways in which gender mediates the experiences of women in the media, particularly focusing on the safety of women journalists. The speakers will explore the forms of violence that women face and how these co-relate to their professional development.

## Speakers and moderator

Session moderator: Professor Hayat Naciri- Local Coordinator of GeSt, University Sultan Moulay Slimane, Morocco.

- i) Dr Robi Koki- Scholar - Media & Communications Studies, United States International University-Africa, Kenya.
- ii) Dr. Rose Reuben- Executive Director, Tanzania Media Women's Association, Tanzania.

## Presentation by panelists

- i) *Dr. Robi Koki- Examining the status of Holistic Safety for women journalists in Kisumu & Mombasa in Kenya.*

In her presentation, Dr. Robi Koki mentioned that women face violence both in their private and public lives. They faced violence at the workplace, and in the field, and also faced violence in their homes, and this is related to all the work that they do. Out of the respondents, 21% said they are facing low violence at work or they have never experienced violence. Most importantly, 79% faced one form or the other of violence. They faced emotional abuse that led to mental health issues and also 56% faced physical abuse which is the domestic front, public front, and private front where they work. Some of the violation cases include:

- Sexual-related violations in the newsroom and field reporting.
- Sexual insinuation
- Reputational smear campaigns, where journalists would have campaigns that would smear persons' ethics and sexuality.
- Threats to physical attacks on their family members.
- Online violence is associated with their work or positions as journalists since they have a digital footprint that is big and recognized.
- Workplace bullying which includes giving out assignments based on favors. Some assignments were denied because some favors were not offered.
- Physical violence like physical assault at the place of work and outside, threats to physical attacks, and sexual harassment at the workplace.
- Social stigma alienated in the home because the family does not understand what journalistic work is like. Likewise in the public, and in our country, journalists are looked at with suspicion because people believe they will write a story about them.

The above-mentioned violations led to the following effects on female journalists:

- Self-censorship where one has to take care of themselves to avoid any form of violation.
- Radio silencing where they don't tell a story that they would wish to tell because of the consequences that come with telling the story.
- Soft chilling. Most women journalists refuse to take senior positions because they don't want positions where they are recognized.

Findings on the socio-psycho support provided by the different media houses.

From the findings, Standard Group media house is one of the houses that provide the most gender-awareness policies. They have formed internal mechanisms to protect women in the workplace. The other provision was mental health care through a medical insurance policy. The organization's legal services that were provided by the organization were only related to work, which is defamation and liability. The organization does not harbor any legal cost for sexual harassment.

The Standard Group had formed a liable committee and a labor committee to address legal issues that will deal with these women. Other socio-psycho support provided includes:

- Gender awareness promotions
- Leadership
- Job rotation mechanism

Outside the context of being an employee of the media house, 53% of the respondents tried to file individualized therapy sessions from friends because this was cheaper and easy to access, 7% of women journalists in employment acknowledged that the organization offered mental health, while 78% of women in journalism acknowledged that they had medical policies.

In conclusion, these were some of the proposals made:

- To involve professional bodies like the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) to provide psychosocial support for journalists as they face the challenges that they want.
- Strategies to enhance holistic protection for women journalists included the development of a handbook to carry out holistic protection, and sensitization training programs for women journalists.
- Financial support to pay for therapy outside the media houses.
- Having an appropriate schedule where they could have social support from outside the organization.
- Formalize working relationships with various organizations that offer mental health care services e.g., hospitals or those that offer education in counseling and mental health insurance providers and others that offer counseling services.
- Media houses to strengthen organizational administrative justice systems, implement workplace discrimination policy, diversity occupation of health and health policies.
- Sensitize the organization on comprehensive induction programs that focus on workplace violation, and enforcement of human resource policies to ensure holistic protection of women in the media and civil society bases.
- Organize social well-being events that provide forums to educate family members and the community on journalism and its contribution to democracy.
- Partnership and organization strengthening of members' association to deliver psychosocial and legal support.
- Supporting women outside the media houses in resource mobilization to solicit finances and in-kind support from the government, civil society, medical services, and public centers.

*ii) Dr Rose Reuben- Sexual Harassment and corruption in the Media sector.*

Dr Rose Reuben started by highlighting that sexual harassment and corruption are the major challenges in the media sector. She further highlighted findings from research which show that:

- Women journalists are more likely to be judged by male colleagues on the basis of appearance and personality traits rather than their professional accomplishments, and hence they find themselves undergoing sexual harassment.
- In the media sector, women are underrepresented, hence they report in the production of soft news. They are the minority in the auditorium and managerial positions, and few stay in the media sector despite the fact that they are the majority in journalism and mass media communication colleges.
- Women run away from the media because of sexual harassment and sexual corruption.

It is clear that sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of sexual nature with the purpose of affecting and violating the dignity of a person by creating or intimidating a hostile, degrading, and offensive environment to the person. Sexual corruption on the other hand is demanding favor of sexual nature in exchange for service.

In Tanzania, sexual harassment or corruption. is a criminal offense. Media in Tanzania and Africa need to put measures to make sure women are safe and their dignity secured. In Tanzania, anybody committing the offense of sexual harassment is liable to a fine not exceeding 5 million or imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or both. As activists and researchers, this punishment is less compared to the effect the perpetrator has on the affected person.



From research carried out in 2021, the women who are most affected are those that are fresh from college to the media houses or freelancers. Most women in media would find themselves in a sexually corrupt environment since they had to go through unfriendly or non-conducive procedures to publish their stories.

Dr Rose Reuben mentioned the following as causes of sexual harassment or corruption in most female journalists:

- Low pay hence falling into traps to sustain their lives
- Incompetence in their work making them accept sexual corruption to retain their workplaces.
- Inconsistence in salary payment.
- Lack of contracts for their work.
- Laziness amongst journalists who cannot finish their tasks in time.

Effects of Sexual harassment and corruption include:

- Lack of job promotions for female journalists.
- Low self-esteem.
- Less carrier development

The perpetrators of sexual harassment and corruption, according to the research were mostly lecturers, media owners, editors, politicians, directors of big organizations, senior reporters, producers, managers, and human resource managers. Most of these stories are not published in the media because most editors say that the stories cannot sell out. More findings in the research show that the highly accused are the editors who are mostly the bosses of these media houses. Therefore, the victim may not access the HRM department. Also, most media houses do not have policies.

The proposed mechanisms to handle sexual corruption in the media houses include:

- Creating opinion boxes
- Create annual meetings with correspondence for the reporters and retainers to have a window for discussion on sexual corruption and security.
- The state to ensure equal rights between men and women in legislation policies, programs, training, and recruitment.
- Engage in national programs for violence against women and children.

Some of the challenges that most female journalists in media houses encounter is that they are not ready to speak. They don't want to report the issues to the police or anywhere. Most women remain quiet and depressed. Some of them quit or surrender to their perpetrators.

The recommendations that were brought forth include:

- To extend understanding of sexual corruption and harassment among journalists, both males and women.
- To enhance dialogues on causes of sexual corruption and sexual harassment within media.
- Safeguarding policies that deal with sexual harassment and sexual corruption.
- She concluded by saying that all people should join hands to fight sexual corruption and sexual harassment. It is high time also the media houses talk for themselves rather than depending on others to talk for them.

## **Conclusion**

In line with the theme and methodology of the AWIM22 conference, this panel produced the following actionable actions in response to the following topic: Safety of Women in Media (online/offline). Sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in the media.

In Kenya, women face violence both in their private and public lives. Some of the violent acts include Sexual-related violations in the newsroom and field reporting, sexual insinuation, reputational smear campaigns, threats to physical attacks on their family members, online violence, workplace bullying, physical violence like physical assault, and social stigma. Some of the proposals that came up include:

- To involve professional bodies like the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) to provide psychosocial support for journalists as they face the challenges that they want.
- Strategies to enhance holistic protection for women journalists included the development of a handbook to carry out holistic protection, and sensitization training programs for women journalists.
- Financial support to pay for therapy outside the media houses.
- Having an appropriate schedule where they could have social support from outside the organization.
- Formalize working relationships with various organizations that offer mental health care services e.g., hospitals or those that offer education in counseling and mental health insurance providers and others that offer counseling services.
- Media houses to strengthen organizational administrative justice systems, implement workplace discrimination policy, diversity occupation of health and health policies.
- Sensitize the organization on comprehensive induction programs that focus on workplace violation, and enforcement of human resource policies to ensure holistic protection of women in the media and civil society bases.
- Organize social well-being events that provide forums to educate family members and the community on journalism and its contribution to democracy.
- Partnership and organization strengthening of members' association to deliver psychosocial and legal support.
- Supporting women outside the media houses in resource mobilization to solicit finances and in-kind support from the government, civil society, medical services, and public centers.

In Tanzania, the cases of sexual harassment were majorly caused by Low pay, incompetence in their work, inconsistency in salary payment, Lack of contracts for their work, and laziness amongst journalists who cannot finish their tasks on time. These made the female journalists fall into traps of sexual harassment and corruption. Some of the effects of Sexual harassment and corruption included lack of job promotions for female journalists, low self-esteem, and less carrier development. Proposed actions include:

- Creating opinion boxes
- Create annual meetings with correspondence for the reporters and retainers to have a window for discussion on sexual corruption and security.
- The state to ensure equal rights between men and women in legislation policies, programs, training, and recruitment.
- Engage in national programs for violence against women and children.

# Conclusions & Recommendations



In an atmosphere marked by constructive dialogue, the sixth annual African Women in Media Conference concluded its work and activities, which lasted two days, in the spiritual capital of the Kingdom of Morocco. It celebrated the media achievements and journalistic works published by African women working in various media across the continent.

The closing ceremony, which coincided with the eve of the international celebration of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10), was marked by the announcement ceremony of the winners of three prizes, which were handed during the awards ceremony by the Head of Communications at the African Union Commission, Ms. Wynne Musabayana, the three winning categories were:

- i) AU Theme of the Year 2022 – The Year of Nutrition, Winner: Marie-Therese Nanlong, Nigeria.
- ii) Promoting efforts towards the Economic and Financial Inclusion of African Women, Winner: Elizabeth Angira, Kenya
- iii) Promoting the Rights of Children in Africa, Winner: Melody Chikono, Zimbabwe.

In a statement to the media on the sidelines of the closing day of the conference, Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola, CEO and founder of the African Women in Media, expressed her great joy at "the lively discussions and exchanges during these two days marked by a distinguished international presence to share the best practices and experiences in the area of gender equality in the media.

Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola said the sixth conference resulted in "an explicit call for African media to cover global issues without bias or discrimination, such as gender equality, culture, and gender, as well as environmental issues and world peace.

For his part, the president and co-founder of the International Institute of Languages and Cultures of Fez, and one of the organizing partners of the conference, Professor Moha Ennaji, explained that the presentation of the "three prizes" aims to "support and encourage the serious, distinguished and effective production carried out by African women journalists to support the development of the continent in order to achieve the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Professor Moha Ennaji added, in a statement to the press, that the most important recommendations of the conference were; the fight against all forms of violence against African women in the media, strengthening women's position in the media through an approach that includes training and professional integration of African women in this field, encouraging African women in the field of the media to occupy positions of editorial decision-making, management, and administration, in addition to strengthening the dialogue between women journalists on the African continent and consolidating cooperation between governmental and private media industry, and to find effective ways to change and improve the image of African women in the media in general.

It should be noted that the proceedings of the conference were marked by the presentation of disturbing figures, according to a field study carried out in a number of African countries: the representation of African women in the media does not exceed 22 percent and some overarching recommendations were presented as follows:

## List of Recommendations

### On Instituting gender sensitive policies in media organizations

- Women must be integrated into the technology sections of media companies and they must be trained to occupy high positions of leadership.
- There is a dire need for the implementation and application of policies to stop sexual harassment and similarly the media must be gender-monitored by regulations.
- Women must be motivated and supported to take roles in media positions, and they need to be aware of the policies and regulations that support them.
- Funding allocations in media organizations should account for the inequality between the genders in the media space. Funding must be allocated to promote equality.
- Implementation of policies must take into account societal/cultural conditioning and they must be contextual.
- Women in media must be part of policy making and media organizations must guarantee safe spaces where women can feel comfortable to be vocal.
- Media organizations must develop and implement egalitarian policies and frameworks that would support both skilled men and women in this industry to progress and work towards achieving the UN's 2030 SDP goals which address the dominant narrative of inequalities both in Nigeria and Africa's media industry.

### On Visual representation of women in mainstream and online media

- Media organizations must be more mindful of the way they portray women, and strive for more nuanced and accurate representation. This can be achieved through more diverse representation in media production, as well as more careful and responsible reporting on issues related to women. By working towards more balanced and fair representation, the media can play a positive role in challenging and dismantling harmful stereotypes and promoting a more just and equal society.

### On women in media and the global challenges of peace, security, climate change and food security.

- Media must clearly frame the harms caused by climate change to vulnerable Global South communities. Climate Change is a human rights issue.
- Climate policy needs to incorporate climate justice and human rights perspectives.
- Women, People of Color, and vulnerable communities in Africa should have a say in the creation and implementation of international climate change mitigation efforts and climate justice policies.
- For practical and effective climate change mitigation, we must also unleash the knowledge and capability of women in Africa.

### On women's representation in political participation.

- Online sexual harassment, finance, laws, culture sabotage, and media misrepresentation are all challenges that limit female political participation, the media should be mandated to equitably cover women in addition to media training on gender sensitivities while making their coverage.
- Proposed actions for equitable participation of women in politics in Africa include:
  - Promoting and sustaining women's mentorship to ready them for participation in politics.
  - Institutionalization of gender policies within political parties, schools, and even homes.
  - Countering nepotism and political patronage.
  - Involving and emphasizing the role of civil society in teaching women about their rights.
  - Educating the youth in gender equality discourse.
  - Emphasizing financial independence for women.
  - Encouraging young women to be interested in politics.
  - Including women in mainstream news channels and not just on social media.
  - Implementation of already existing laws and policies on gender equality.
  - Normalization of relationships between men and women in Morocco where men and women in workplaces are often segregated.
  - Research, analysis, and dissemination of critical discourse about women in politics.

### **On women and digital technologies.**

- Digital technologies must amplify women's voices and encourage the voiceless ones to speak and enhance female agency within African social contexts.
- There is a need for a democratic digital platform that will give voice to the voiceless.
- Digital technologies should be used to strengthen and deepen female political participation and there should be an urgent call for more social agencies that advocate women's political participation and activism.
- Women's rights concerns should be regarded as human rights.
- Women's Opinion leaders can influence political movements on digital platforms, so their responsibility is to engage in such movements and to make the movements visible as long as they give rise to change.
- Pertinently, solidarity between women from diverse countries should be promoted to overcome the problems of representation on digital platforms.
- Similarly, movements from different countries should look for common ground in which there is much more synergy.

### **On Mental Health and the media for health advocacy.**

- Media companies should involve in-country professional bodies to provide psychosocial support for journalists.
- Strategies to enhance holistic protection for women journalists included the development of a handbook to carry out holistic protection, and sensitization training programs for women journalists.
- Journalists should have appropriate work schedules that allow them to have social support outside the organization.
- Media organizations should formalize working relationships with various organizations that offer mental health care services e.g., hospitals or those that offer education in counseling and mental health insurance providers and others that offer counseling services.
- Media houses should strengthen organizational administrative justice systems, implement workplace discrimination policies, and diversity occupation of health and health policies.
- Media organizations should be sensitized on comprehensive induction programs that focus on workplace violation, and enforcement of human resource policies to ensure holistic protection of women in the media and civil society bases.
- Media managers should organize social well-being events that provide forums to educate family members and the community on journalism and its contribution to democracy.

### **On the sexual harassment of women in the workplace**

- There is a need to support women outside the media houses in resource mobilization to solicit finances and in-kind support from the government, civil society, medical services, and public centers.
- There is a need for innovation to train members and a wider reach of media houses to reach the locals.
- There should be a collaboration of the media houses with the state to give women more protection from sexual harassment.
- Media organizations must create opportunities for income through funding and partnering with other developed media houses.

### **On collective action and representation of women in media**

- There is a need to establish community media set up by female professional journalists in rural areas which promote the development and education needs of women.
- Media partners and allies should initiate media literacy education, especially regarding 21st-century media technology with an aim to increase the participation of rural women as both news sources and news subjects.
- There is a need for the dissemination of information in local vernacular language and increase funding to promote inclusive digital participation of women.
- There is an increasing need for mentorship, having more women mentors in senior positions who will mentor others, bring them in and show them how to climb the career ladder and how to progress in their careers. This will make more women work in key positions roles, and make key decisions that will positively impact women in the industry.
- There should be more spaces to talk about the issues of inequality by amplifying voices using forums like conferences, symposiums, and the like.



**AFRICAN WOMEN IN MEDIA CONFERENCE 2022**  
**#AWiM22**

**Fes, Morocco.**  
**CONFERENCE REPORT**  
**8- 9 DECEMBER 2022**

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